

Editorial

Welcome to our Autumn issue.

There's the usual mix of the work that we do, media coverage, our news (new partner!) and food for thought. Also in this issue, the ongoing research into the long-term outcomes of reunions has progressed to the point where we are able to provide a small flavour of the findings.



**Adults Affected
by Adoption**

Lorna's Story

Around October-November 2003, there was a series called 'Separated at Birth', about adoptees finding birth relatives. I had always felt I wouldn't try to find birth family while my adoptive parents were still alive, but for some reason, I completed and returned a form to Birthlink (this still being in the age of snail mail!)

Within a week, I got a call back to say my brother Dave had registered my details over 17 years previously, trying to trace me. I wrote a long letter, and sent it to Birthlink for them to forward it on. Dave wrote back by return, including his phone number, so the day I got his letter I rang and we spoke for over two hours! What did surprise me as I hadn't considered it – he is older than me by 16 months; I'd always assumed I had been some young girl's "mistake"...

We are also half-siblings, yet the family resemblance is still quite striking, I think.

He had (for a number of reasons and for quite some time), been estranged from our mother Margo but in the last two years they have been reconciled, and now I am also in regular phone contact with her, and see them both every time I go back 'home' to Scotland.

Roll on February!

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Birthlink in the News

We helped ITV News journalist, Martin Geissler find his biological family and he wrote about this in The Times <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/here-is-the-news-reporter-goes-back-to-his-roots-0v1rvhkrm>



'The Oldest Thrift Shop in Town'



Our charity shop celebrated its 60th birthday on the 28th of September, stamping its place as the oldest charity shop in Scotland.

Originally called 'The Thrift Centre', the shop operated from a basement flat on Darnaway Street. Despite being open only two evenings a week, Wednesday and Thursday 7pm-9pm, Neil Gascoyne's *Scotsman* article goes on 'the Thrift Centre was such a tremendous success that it wasn't long before it moved into our forever home – and an actual shop at 6 Bruntsfield Place. In 1976 we were gifted another premises, in which we opened Thrift Shop 2; the scruffy younger brother fitted in well, and still does to this day'. <http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/neil-gascoyne-scotland-s-oldest-charity-shop-hits-60-1-4550435>



Dory Found

Moira Hislop, 66, was forced to give her eldest daughter Susan, 48, up for adoption by her parents when she fell pregnant aged 17. That's Dory from *Finding Dory* in the middle by the way and it's there because watching the film made Susan's birth brother think about belonging and roots and then he registered with us. Read on at: <https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/living/853736/scots-mum-daughter-finding-dory/>



I'm tempted to ask if everything's Hunky Dory...

There are many other films that you may 'read' from a particular adoption-related angle. This blog lists *ET* and *My Little Pony* and *Lego Ninjago* films amongst others: <http://www.adoptionlcs.com/> Then there's *Anne of Green Gables* (I know, I know, it's also and was first a book) and *Despicable Me*. Send in your suggestions with a review—but leave out *Annie*.

New partner!

'Future Pathways is the agency that offers help and support to people who were abused or neglected as children while they were living in care in Scotland. It works 'to help survivors access person-centred support that will help them to lead full, healthy and independent lives and find their own pathways to a positive future. 'In care' includes living in residential or foster care, living in a boarding school (state, private or independent), having a long-term stay in hospital or spending time in a Young Offender's Institution'. We are bringing to the table Birthlink's experience of fifteen years of working with people who have been in care to access and make sense of their care record, and helping them search for and make contact with family members from whom they have been separated.



Food for thought corner: 'High Court Judge calls for fresh approach to adoption

It may no longer be possible to create an "impermeable seal" around adoption, a High Court Judge has suggested.

In a lecture given to the Family Justice Council yesterday, Appeal Court Judge Lord Justice McFarlane said the high rate of adoption in the UK, particularly amongst older children, combined with the pervasive nature of social media posed real challenges to the care system. Older adopted children carried stronger memories of their birth families and were more likely to be traumatised as a result he noted. "The difficulties facing adopters and adopted children in this regard have been made significantly more difficult ... with the ever-increasing facility to trace and make contact, in an uncontrolled way, with individuals over the internet or via social media".

Facebook and similar sites have caused, the Judge claimed, an "erosion in the hitherto impermeable seal around the adoptive placement". As a result, His Lordship suggested, it may be necessary to "raise the question of whether our model of adoption continues to be as valuable to each of the individuals concerned as we have hitherto held that it is". The Judge was critical of adoption practices in the UK, which has a high rate of forcible adoption when compared to other countries.

"Magistrates and judges up and down the country on every day of the week are making these highly intrusive draconian orders removing children permanently from their natural families on the basis that to do so is better for the child and that 'nothing else will do'. But, I ask rhetorically: 'How do we know this is so?'"

Approximately 20 per cent of all adoptions involve children over the age of four, he noted, and some involve eight year-olds or even older youngsters. Adoptions at an older age leads to a higher rate of placement breakdown and such youngsters are also more likely to spontaneously try and make contact with their birth families via Facebook and similar services, and experience disruption and upset as a result. This, said the Judge:

"...seems a long cry from the sunny upland of a happy, settled, secure future with a 'forever family' which has been the traditional goal of those making adoption orders to date".

His Lordship also cited widespread ignorance about the nature of the family court system, believing this leads "some parents to disengage entirely from the process, refuse to be assessed by independent experts, dispense with the expert lawyers freely provided by the state and, in some extreme cases, flee with their children to Ireland, France or further afield." <http://www.marilynstowe.co.uk/2017/03/10/high-court-judge-calls-for-fresh-approach-to-adoption/>

Research Update

Birthlink is funding research into the long-term outcomes of reunions that have taken place via the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland (ACR). Our working title is '10 Years After'.

385 people were mailed in April and May. Adopted men and women, birth mothers and birth fathers, and brothers and sisters.

After a second sweep to identify those who have changed addresses, we have now received 70 replies. This is a good 'hit-rate' given that some of the reunions took place twenty years ago and some new addresses were untraceable, together with sadly, news of some people no longer being with us.

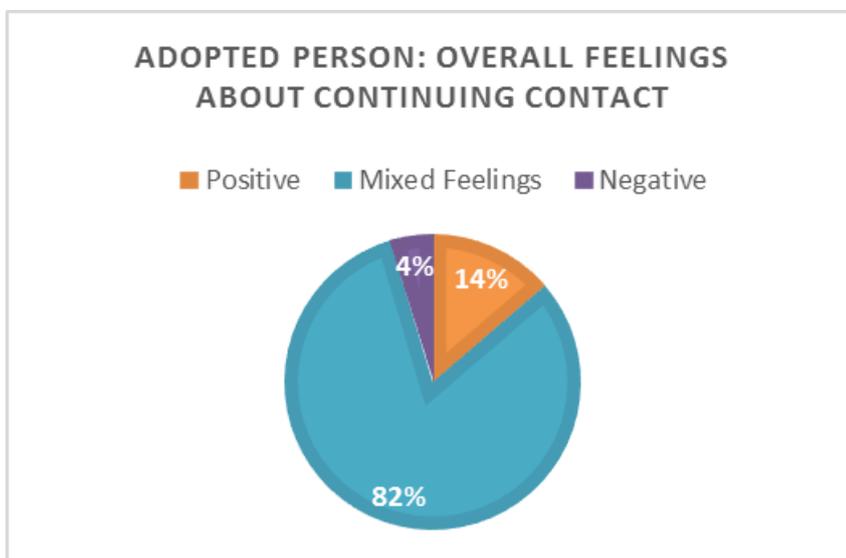
Here is a flavour of what people have told us:

"We meet once a year. We text, phone and send photos etc. I do wish it was more."

(Question 11 'If contact with each other has continued, how would you describe this in your own words? E.g. how often is this? Is it enough?')

"Got on with mother but sister was jealous, a nightmare. Mother was weak, sister had power over her so told them to stick it"

(Question 12 'If contact between you has ceased, how would you describe the experience in your own words?')



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

