

Editorial

Throughout this Autumn we are celebrating our one hundred and eleventh year with much activity relating to national adoption weeks in October (UK) and November (Scotland). This makes for a handy 111/11 signature to the events. Keep an eye on social media for developments.



**Adults Affected
by Adoption**

Redress Scheme

Regular Bulletin readers will recall that our last edition featured news about the Scottish Government's redress scheme for those who have been abused in care. Since then Birthlink has been awarded one of the key jobs in providing this service. The following from the Team Manager explains.

As of the 1 December 2021, Redress Scotland was open for applications. It makes redress payments to people who were abused while in care as children before 1 December 2004.

On the 16 May 2022 Redress went Live at Birthlink to retrieve records for survivors of historical abuse whilst in care. As of Monday 5 October 2022 Redress at Birthlink has been up and running for five calendar months.

We have come a long way in a short space of time. We are a strong team of five who are completely new appointments to Birthlink. Given that Redress itself is a completely new piece of legislation we have all had to work collaboratively to find the best of way of accessing care records for our applicants.

Over these five months we have had the pleasure of working with 78 individuals to date. These individuals are all at different stages of the process and some of them, I am pleased to say, have successfully accessed their records and gone on to submit their chronologies to the Redress Scheme.

Anyone who wishes to use our service to retrieve their records for Redress must first make an application at the Redress Scheme, (see below), from where they will be directed to Birthlink's Redress Record Retrieval Department.

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REDRESS RECORD RETRIEVAL - HOW WE HELP

- Our service is personal, professional, there's time for you
- Your Redress support worker will keep you informed
- Our Aim is to retrieve your records as quickly as possible
- We provide a service that you as an individual require
- We provide emotional support
- We listen to you and empathise
- When retrieved, your records are for you, you decide!

Challenges in retrieving records, are met, and conveyed to you.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

Stage 1 Introduction Stage, Our Administrator will process your Identification Documents. You will then be assigned a support worker who will stay with you throughout the process, when we have your written consent, you will move to....

- Stage 2 We analyse your story and work with you to see where to send Subject Access Requests to gain your records

Stage 3 Once retrieved, if you require it, we will process your records for evidence and send our findings to Redress.

Julie Hand Redress Team Manager

Contact Redress at <https://www.redress.scot/> or call 0300 244 9090. Or write to:
Redress Scotland
PO Box 27177
Glasgow G2 9NL

Redress Scotland wants survivors who are entitled to payment to receive it.



Who's Doing What for Mothers Affected by Historic Adoptions?

Bulletin readers may also recall that there has been speculation over the Scottish Government's response to the strong lobbying for action relating to what is known as 'historic adoptions' - broadly speaking, the infant adoptions that took place across the 1950s to the 1970s and the distress caused by these.

The campaign for an apology for these adoptions continues, however it seems that the Scottish Government is positively responding in that in September a request for declaration of interest in tendering was issued. The tendering is to be for short-term work to survey the field of post and after-adoption services for adults affected by adoption. It is hoped with a view to properly funding a comprehensive service for all concerned.

Needless to say Birthlink has applied to be on the list of those eligible to tender for the job. Watch this space!

Winnie McGillivray 1949—2022

Winnie worked for Birthlink for over twenty years. She was in charge of logging registrations on the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland.

Winnie would be the first to open the mail, enter someone's details



on the data base, and when the registration brought up a matching registration, she was the first to welcome into the world, a 'link' between two people separated by adoption. The rest of us would soon know because when a link occurred, Winnie would ring a bell. The regular sound of that bell was music to our ears and we would rush through to hear the details.



One of the stand-out contributions Winnie made was to prepare a sampler for display at our 100th anniversary. That's her W.MG mark at the bottom left.



We were all saddened to hear of Winnie's passing and wish her

family all our condolences.

National Adoption Week 16 –23 October (UK)

By the time this Bulletin comes out, the UK's National Adoption Week will be over, however we could not let it pass without drawing attention to the massive innovation this year. National Adoption Week will also be about adults affected by adoption. Readers will be forgiven for smacking their foreheads and saying "Well, duh". But, nevertheless, praise where praise is due. The PAC-UK adoption agency ran workshops including 'The voices and stories of adopted people: Identity and relationships', 'The voices and stories of birth families: The importance of connection and relationships in adop-



PAC-UK
Adoption and Permanency Support

tion' - 'bringing together the voices and art of birth parents' and 'Adoption roundtable' - 'bringing together two adopted people, two birth parents and two adoptive parents, to look for common ground and understanding of each other's perspective and to reflect on some of the big issues in adoption.' Let's make adults a regular part of these annual adoption weeks.

National Adoption Week 14th - 18th November (Scotland)

The similarly welcome theme is 'Adoption: The connection with past, present and future family' and here in Scotland, there is to be an online conference on November 15th.

The conference focus will be on 'Adoption: the connection with family, past, present and future'. At the conference, research findings are to be presented by University of Edinburgh researcher Polly Cowan on adoption breakdown. Among other things this will draw attention to the lack of information that we have on the number of adoption breakdowns. Tragic events where more often than not children come back into care - but often without the knowledge of their birth parents.

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Association for Fostering, Kinship & Adoption Scotland

In addition, findings from the 'Supporting Roots' research on birth parents' perspectives on after-adoption support will be presented by Ariane Critchley from the University of Stirling. The conference thus brings together those concerned with children's needs and those of us that have a focus on the needs of birth parents.

The Conference's sessions will be followed by a panel discussion with Q & A

on the theme of maintaining connections across past, present and future family. Find out more at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/adoption-week-scotland-22-online-conference-for-professionals-tickets-431739874587>

Yet more activities of relevance to adults in adoption may appear during the November National Adoption Week and we mean to play our part. There doesn't seem to be anything else of relevance to adults in adoption however, this may change and certainly, we mean to play our part.

In November last year the State of Massachusetts in the USA passed a bill opening access to adoptee birth certificates. The Bill becomes law this November 2022. What follows is an abridged version of what was written at the time of the Bill's passing.

All adopted persons born in Massachusetts would have a way to access their original birth certificate under a bill the House passed Thursday morning, which advocates say grants adopted persons equity and fairness.

The legislation would close a 34-year period where persons born during that timeframe cannot access their original birth certificate without a court order. An adopted child himself, Senator Garballey (one of the Bill's movers) said he is "ecstatic" that the House passed the bill: "From my perspective, [the bill] ensures equality and dignity for all those adopted in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," the Arlington Democrat told State House News Service: "To me, this is a matter of fairness and it helps adopted people in Massachusetts learn about their own personal and medical history, which is so critical."

Under current state law, an adopted person born between July 17, 1974 and Jan. 1, 2008 cannot access their original birth certificate without obtaining a court order that unseals the record. Adopted persons outside of that window can access their original birth certificate once they turn 18 or with the help of their adoptive parents. The legislation would erase the gap and allow adopted persons over the age of 18 to access their original birth certificate or the adopted parents of a child under 18 to access the document.

Critics of laws closing similar decades-



long gaps point to birth parents' right to confidentiality, according to Luce (Adoptee Rights Law Center), but

he said bills like the one in Massachusetts are a "modern approach" to how adoption and access to records should have been for decades: "It's overdue, and they need to modernize how people think about what it means to make a person's birth secret," Luce said. "It has unintended damaging results so that's the correction we're seeking now."

Luce, an adoptee, obtained his original birth certificate from the District of Columbia: "It was very meaningful to have it even though I knew all the information on it," he said. "It's partially verification that you were born on this date, to this person, in this place whereas your amended birth certificate after an adoption is not correct at all. You were not born to your adoptive parents." (Chris Van Buskirk, State House News Service).

We welcome this development in the States but readers ought to know that the majority of states remain committed to a sealed adoption records policy.

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

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