Helen’s story:

Helen was born in 1954. She was adopted by a loving family and raised in the Scottish Border’s.

In 2014, Helen registered on the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland, there was no link and Helen, curious to find out about her birth family was supported to access her adoption records and Adoption Court Process papers. Helen discovered lots of information about her birth mother Laura and was delighted to learn the name of her putative birth father Albert. With the support of our search team, Laura was traced, she had emigrated to the USA a year after Helen’s birth. She had been married twice and had two children. Through our mediation support service, we made an approach to Laura, sadly she felt unable to have any contact with Helen, explaining that she had never told her family about her and that she did not feel able to do so at this stage of life. Helen although distraught by this response, respected her decision and asked only one thing; that she would share detailed information about Albert. Laura refused, stating that she was not prepared to revisit a time in her life that had been so painful and traumatic.

Helen was determined to find out about Albert. She conducted her own research with the information available to her and found an address for Albert’s sister Pauline whom she wrote to. Pauline disclosed that Albert was not her father. Albert had died young; he had two sons. Pauline claimed that whilst Laura had been in a relationship with Albert she had an affair with an older, married man. Pauline remained adamant that the information in Helen’s adoption records was incorrect. Helen was shocked and devastated by this news. The only way she could prove a connection to Albert was to do a DNA test.

Helen registered her DNA with Ancestry and was supported by a genealogist to review the results. It was concluded that Albert was not Helen’s birth father. Helen contacted Birthlink for emotional support. She was offered space and time to talk about her experience and the impact on her identity and sense of wellbeing. “I need to understand where I come from and to be able to tell my sons where they belong too.”

The DNA site had linked Helen with a 2nd cousin on her paternal line; a woman called Amy who lived in Glasgow. Helen again accessed support from Birthlink. We wrote out to Amy and shared Helen’s story and the fact that we thought Amy’s Uncle Hugh may have been Helen’s birth father. Amy was so supportive of Helen’s need to know the truth and immediately agreed to a DNA test. They communicated regularly whilst waiting for the results. Amy described her Uncle Hugh as a lovely man, “like a Dad to me”. She shared that he had been in an unhappy marriage and never had children. Sadly, he had died in 2015.

The DNA test confirmed that Hugh was indeed Helen’s birth father. Amy shared photographs, family stories and memories that gave Helen a real sense of the man Hugh was.

Helen shared how knowing the truth had brought her a sense of peace. “This is fantastic news. We are both so pleased that we are related and I have finally, found my family”.