Good Practice Guidance **Birth Records Counselling – Access to Records**

The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 specifies that Adoption Support services must be extended to Adopted Adults, their parent, birth parent and former guardians. The services they are entitled to include, counselling, advice and information. This is commonly referred to as Birth Records Counselling and includes requests from other LAs for a summary of an individual’s Adoption file ( schedule 2 report).

Any requests to access an adoptees Looked After file is not dealt with by this process. This requires a separate application to access their Local Authority care records through the Access to records teams in the Local Authority that they were in the care of.

This practice guidance needs to be read in conjunction with the procedure for Access to Adoption records on Tri.x and the statutory guidance. Also refer to …………( books Melissa identified )

Adoption counts can support an adopted person who is 18 years or over and who lives in the adoption counts region (Manchester, Stockport, Trafford, Salford & Cheshire East). This can be ascertained from information about which Local Authority they pay their council tax to.

Process from Enquiry

* See attachment

If an adoptee has an urgent need to access their records due to their age, health, personal circumstances, then this needs to be allocated as a priority.

Initial meeting

* An adoptee can bring a another person to support them when first meeting with us to discuss accessing their records . If appropriate they can continue to be present at any future sessions.
* When working with an adoptee it is imperative to check their identity to ensure they can legally access the adoption records relating to them. This will involve meeting them face to face and providing evidence of their identity. We must record that we have seen a photo identification and proof of their current address (This can be an in date driving licence or passport and a utility bill or council tax bill) to confirm their identity.
* During the first session it is important to explore the adoptees support network. Check out their network of family and friends who will support them.
* Use the interview questionnaire attached as a guide for your first meeting with the adoptee.
* If concerned about the mental wellbeing of the adoptee when you make contact with them, openly discuss the feelings that accessing adoption records can trigger. Do not be afraid to suggest they seek medical support to assist them in coping with this process.
* You will need to seek their consent to find out more about their particular support needs if necessary eg if they have a mental health support worker. This is important to assist you in deciding the right time for them to access their records., as the agency has discretion to share their information. If appropriate and with consent , the adoptees support worker may join them in their appointments with you. This may provide some longer term support after you have shared their records with them. If necessary the GP or specialist worker may give advice about the adoptees ability to engage in accessing their records .
* Any decisions made about not allowing an individual access to their records , needs to be agreed by the Adoption Support Manager , and recorded on the file with evidence to support the decision.
* Locating adoption records can take time, so it is important to keep the adoptee updated on progress. Advise them that a realistic timescale for receiving information is between 6-9 months from when the work was allocated to a Social Worker.

Accessing Records

A formal process needs to be followed to gain access to the adoptees adoption file . In each of our LAs the details are below ;

* Stockport – contact the Information Governance Team. Complete a records request form and attached to an email , including a reference number.
* Salford - Check the records Database ( see Caroline Simpson) and request file from storage.

## Manchester – contact the contact centre **Telephone** 0161 234 5001 **Email**

mcsreply@manchester.gov.uk

* Trafford – pre 1981 records – admin undertake a file search on RESTORE system and print. Post 1981 the database is checked and request for file made .
* Cheshire East – Jo Appleton checks the Adoption Index and requests file from deep store. contact the Information Governance Team , admin check with deep store for records held.

The File Summary

* It is important to give the adoptee a summary of their adoption file alongside as much content from their adoption file as possible. This information must be redacted to remove any 3rd party information. ( need more detail here, to define 3rd party info)
* There is a clear format for the file summary – attached (not done yet!)