

INTERMEDIARY SERVICE

The Post Adoption Resource Centre (PARC) has an established intermediary service for people who would like assistance in making an approach to birth relatives. PARC has been helping people separated from birth relatives to make contact with each other since 1991, when adoption laws changed to make contact possible. Below are answers to the most common questions we are asked.

I want to make contact myself – can PARC help with that?

Yes, many people ask us for help in writing that first difficult letter. Phone us for a copy of our booklet *First Letters*. We are happy to give you feedback on your draft before you send it. Our advice is that letters are much more likely than telephoning to lead to a good outcome. Our experience is that being phoned about a 20 or 30 year secret can be just too sudden. PARC counsellors talk to many people at any and all stages of the contact and are happy to act as "go-between" or help you in any way possible while you make your contact yourself.

I want to use a "go-between" can PARC help?

Yes - there are two main ways we can help, and you can choose which feels right for you. We always make contact by letter, and only resort to the telephone when we have had no response to two or three letters. These ways are:-

1. We may act on your behalf in approaching and receiving contact from the person you are seeking.
2. You may make the approach yourself, in consultation with a PARC counsellor, but you may wish to offer the person you are seeking the choice of either responding to PARC or to you directly.

What does PARC's "go-between" service need from me?

1. Copies of your adoption papers: Supply Authority or your original/amended birth certificate or order of adoption and ID.
2. We will need you to sign an "Intermediary Service Agreement" which sets out your and our responsibilities.

3. Have a planning interview with a PARC counsellor if possible face to face, but if not, by phone. In this, we will cover:-
 - a. We are concerned to have some confidence that the person being approached is the right person, so we will want to check the ID of the person to be contacted and how you located them.
 - b. What information about yourself you prefer to be kept confidential, and what you would like shared.
 - c. What your most important questions are. This is very important to have clear, in case the person will give information but does not want future contact.
 - d. Preparing a letter explaining your reasons for searching and some details of yourself and your life. It can help to include a few photos of yourself, your life and your present family. These are not sent with the initial letter, but it can be good to be able to offer these when the person responds to our letter. Many people will respond positively to our offer of sending on a letter and a photo to them, even when the idea of contact may be very new to them. In our experience, having time to read and re-read a letter, and study photos can be a great help to a person initially very unsure about contact.

What usually happens ?

1. Your PARC counsellor writes a careful letter, consulting with you until you are ready for us to send it.
2. If we hear back, we explain who we are, about your request, and offer the letter and photo, giving any support we can eg, an appointment for counselling.
3. We continue to act as "go-between" for as long as both parties request this, talking to both until they feel OK about talking or writing to each other.

You may like to order from PARC a copy of *At Least Now I Know* which looks at the outcomes of about 160 reunions. We also have lots of books on reunion available for loan or purchase.

What if ?

1. If we don't get a reply after four – eight weeks, we usually re-send the letter, perhaps sending it by certified mail, after consultation with you.
2. If we still don't get a reply we may phone, again, after consultation with you.
3. If the person responds but refuses contact with you, we use the opportunity to ask your important questions and obtain as much information as possible. We explain that we will pass on the "no contact" request but can give no guarantees.

What advice do people give who have been through the process?

They advise you to:

- be patient
- proceed cautiously at your own pace, not expecting too much too soon
- be clear about your expectations of contact
- prepare yourself for rejection
- respect people's confidentiality, try and put yourself in their position
- never forget that although you may have been searching for a long time, the other person may only just be beginning to think of you as a "real person."

Fees

This Centre is funded by the Department of Community Services with the expectation that the Centre charges a fee to cover some expenses. Our standard fees for the intermediary service are set out below however, we do not wish any person to be prevented from considering using our service because of these fees. Should you need to discuss fee arrangements, please speak with the manager.

INITIAL INTERVIEW plus outreach letters and telephone contact plus support for both parties during the process of establishing contact. \$180 (\$50.00 concession rate).

The cost of any post reunion counselling required to be negotiated with the person requesting this service.

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