

## **Historical Adoptions FAQs:**

***Q1: I was adopted through an Adoption Agency based in Croydon. What archived adoption records does Croydon Council hold?***

Croydon Council Adoption Team holds the archived adoption records for two large Adoption Agencies which closed in 1992—The Mission of Hope and The Homeless Children's Aid and Adoption Society. The Mission of Hope was based latterly at Birdhurst Lodge in South Croydon and had numerous homes and maternity units in South London. It placed children for adoption from 1893 until it closed in 1992.

The Homeless Children's Aid and Adoption Society was established in 1920 under Dr. F.B. Meyer and had offices in various parts of London, latterly in Muswell Hill, and also had a children's home at Hutchison House, Browning Road, Leytonstone, East London.

The Mission of Hope and The Homeless Children's Aid and Adoption Society merged in 1980 and was renamed The Mission of Hope for Children's Aid and Adoption, and then again, in 1989, renamed as Christian Family Concern. Christian Family Concern ceased being an Adoption Agency in 1992.

***Q2: I am a post adoption worker.. I am providing post adoption support for someone who believes she was born and adopted in Croydon. Is Croydon Council likely to hold any archived adoption records?***

We may have, but not all people born and adopted through a court in Croydon were adopted through Croydon Council (or one of the agencies whose archived records we hold).

You will need to write to us giving as much information as possible. We will then check our archived data base for archived records.

The adopted person will also need to apply for a copy of their original birth certificate from the Registrar General. This will lead to the name of the court and then, possibly, to the name of the adoption agency.

Alternatively, you can apply to the Registrar General for the name of the adoption agency using the prescribed form (see Registrar General's website). There will be a small fee for this payable to the Registrar General.

***Q3: I was placed for adoption through Croydon Council. Can I read my records?***

The archived adoption agency records held by Croydon Council are the property of the Council. Archived adoption agency records typically hold information relating to a number of people—the adopted person, the birth family and the adoptive family. The adoption agency has the discretion to disclose information. Whole files cannot be read by any single subject because disclosure is regulated by Adoption Law and Regulations and by Data Protection.

***Q4: I was adopted through the Mission of Hope and Croydon holds my adoption records. Can I come to Croydon to be interviewed and to see the records which relate to me?***

It is Croydon's policy to access archived adoption records, read and to prepare a comprehensive summary. The summary is sent to a post adoption worker in your own area along with copies of relevant documents and original letters in your birth parent's handwriting. Our experience shows that it is generally more satisfactory to be interviewed locally as you may need continuing post adoption support and assistance with Intermediary Services.

You will need to approach your local authority adoption team for a post adoption service. The relevant local authority is the one to which you pay your Council Tax. Some local authorities have contracted out their post adoption services to independent and voluntary agencies, such as NORCAP, After Adoption and Action for Children. Most local authorities have a web site which gives information on how to contact post adoption services.

***Q5: I was born in The Mission of Hope, in South Croydon. I always thought that I was adopted from The Mission, but now I have discovered that my "adoptive" parents fostered me, but did not adopt me legally. Does Croydon hold my records from The Mission of Hope?***

Croydon may hold records, but in your case not in the Adoption Archives. Approx. 2,500 children were born at The Mission between 1911 and 1972, but were not placed for adoption. Some, like you, were fostered on a permanent basis. The Croydon Local Studies Library and Archives Service holds these archived records. You can apply to the Local Studies Library at the Croydon Central Library, Katharine Street, Croydon CR9 1ET Tel: 0208 872 66900 ext 61112 for an archive search. If records are found you may be given permission to read the file in situ.

***Q6: I believe that Croydon Council holds my records. I do not want to be interviewed locally by an adoption worker. Can you send the records direct to my home address?***

No. Your ID has to be checked by an adoption support worker and we have a duty of care to ensure that you have access to post adoption support even if you choose not to use that service after being interviewed.

***Q7: I am 19 years of age. I was raised by my mother and my step-father. I have met my birth father but now want to cut off all ties with him. I want my step father to adopt me. Can you arrange this please?***

I am afraid not. Adoption is a legal process available for children below the age of 18 years, unless an application was made to a court before the 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday and granted before the 19<sup>th</sup> Birthday. You need to seek counselling and legal advice on how you might be able to change your relationship with your birth father, for example through a change of surname by deed poll and by other processes.

***Q8: I was adopted through a Court in Croydon. Does this mean that Croydon Council holds my adoption records?***

Not necessarily. Before 1965, when the greater London Council (GLC) was established, Croydon was a relatively small Borough. Adoptive families from Surrey, other South London Boroughs and the London County Council (LCC) would apply for adoption orders through the Croydon County and Magistrates Courts, as well as other courts in London. The adopters may not have lived in Croydon, the child may have been placed by an Adoption Agency other than Croydon and the Mission of Hope (MOH) and Homeless Children's Aid and Adoption Society (HCAAS), or your adoption may have been made through a Third Party or Privately (eg with a relative). However, we can check our archive data base.

If Croydon (and the MOH and HCAAS) was not the adoption agency you will need to write to the Court where your order was made and ask your local Post Adoption Service for help.

***Q9: I have paperwork which shows that I was placed for adoption through the MOH.***

***What do I do next?***

Where do you live? If you live in Croydon we can provide you with a post adoption support service. If you live outside Croydon you will need to make contact with the Post Adoption Service in the area where you live.

If you live in Croydon you will need to write in with a request for a Post Adoption Support Service, giving as much information as you can.

If you live elsewhere, you need to contact your local Adoption Team and ask for a Post Adoption Support Service. Your local Post Adoption Worker will need to write to us asking for access to the archived adoption file. We will summarise any archived papers which we have and will forward to your local Post Adoption Worker.

You can access the Government sponsored web-site [adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk](http://adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk) for more information

***Q10: Where do I find a Post Adoption Service?***

You need to contact your County Council, Unitary Authority or your Borough Council. The relevant local authority is the one to which you pay your Council Tax. Some local authorities have contracted out their post adoption services to independent agencies such as NORCAP and After Adoption and Action for Children.

Relevant web-sites usually give contact information.

***Q11: I live outside of the UK. Where do I find a post adoption service?***

Croydon can only send information from adoption records which we hold to a Registered adoption agency or an approved adoption support worker in your area.

You may find the adoptionsearchreunion website useful, but lists of approved adoption support agencies overseas are only available to professionals. If you cannot find such an agency we might consider sending information to a legal representative. You might have to ask the British Consul/Embassy for help. Otherwise, you may have to come back to the UK to access your records. The Inter Country Adoption agency (ICA) may also be able to help.

***Q12: My (adoptive) parents always told me that I was adopted but I have no paperwork to prove this. What do I do?***

If you were legally adopted a copy of your original birth certificate will be annotated with the word: “adopted” in the right hand column. You can apply for a copy of your original birth certificate from the Registrar General at the General Register Office. You can also write to the Registrar General at Adoptions Section, Smedley Hydro, Trafalgar Road, Southport, PR8 2HH for more information.

You can find the website for the General Register Office at [www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk) where you will find a link to [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) and go into adoption certificates.

If you were placed for “adoption” before January 1927, when the first Adoption Act in England and Wales (the Adoption Act 1926) was implemented you may not have been legally adopted. There was no legal requirement for adopters to legally adopt a child who had been placed for them. It took some years after 1926 for foster parents and adopters, and adoption agencies, to get used to using the new Adoption Act.

If you were not legally adopted (that is, through a court), you would have remained as a fostered child, even though you may have used your “adoptive” parents surname.

***Q13. I was born at “Rokeby” 54 Leigham Court Road, Streatham. I know that this Home was owned by The Mission of Hope. Does that mean that The Mission of Hope placed me for adoption?***

Not necessarily. “Rokeby” at 54 Leigham Court Road was certainly owned and run by The Mission of Hope, but not all children born there were placed for adoption by The Mission. Some birth mothers took their children back home with them, others made private arrangements for their child’s adoption, or asked the Matrons to make a Third Party Placement. Some were admitted to the care of The Mission of Hope and were placed for adoption through The Mission. We can check our archive data base.

***Q14: I was born at “The Retreat” 19 or 35 (and 37) Ross Road, Croydon SE25 . Does this mean that I was adopted through Croydon or a Court in Croydon Council?***

There are two parts to the answer to your question. Firstly, if you were born at “The Retreat” it is unlikely that you were adopted through Croydon Council. . 19 and 35 (and 37) Ross Road was a Mother and Baby/Maternity Home run by the National Free Church Women’s Council. It operated during the 1920s through to the 1940s. It was not an adoption agency. Successive Matrons made Private and Third Party arrangements for the placement of children for adoption or fostering. Croydon Borough Council did not become an Adoption Agency until 1948 after the Free Church Women’s Council stopped using 35 Ross Road as a Mother and Baby Home.

The Free Church Women's Council do not appear to have kept records, or, if they did, they have not survived.

Secondly, you MAY have been adopted through a Court in Croydon. You can write to the court and also apply for a copy of your original birth certificate from the Registrar General. This will lead to you being given the name of the Court where your Adoption Order was made. If your adoptive parents lived in Croydon, Croydon Council may have been appointed as the Guardian ad Litem.

***Q15: If my adoption agency records no longer exist, or I was placed Privately or through a Third Party, will there be any records at all about my adoption?***

There may be records. If you were legally adopted, even if no adoption agency was involved, your adoptive parents would have had to apply to a court for an adoption order. The Court may still hold records. The Court would also have appointed a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) or a Reporting Officer (RO) from the local authority where they lived. The GAL and RO's job was to interview your adoptive parents and your birth parent(s) and make sure that the adoption application was legal, that consent was given, and that no money had changed hands. The GAL or RO would have been appointed from the local authority in whose area the adopters lived. Up till 1948 the GAL would have been appointed from the Education Department, as would the "Child Life Visitor" who was appointed to monitor your welfare. The local authority may still have archived records. You adoptive parents would have had to inform their local authority that you had been placed with them.

After 1948 GALs and ROs were appointed from the Children's Department's and, later, Social Services Departments.

***Q16. I was adopted in London in the 1950s. Which would have been my adoptive parent's local authority?***

Checking exactly where your adoptive parents lived is important as boundaries around the edges of London changed several times in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The London County Council (LCC) was the umbrella local government body for much of Central London in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The LCC was disbanded in 1965 when the Greater London Council was formed. All records, including court records, from the former LCC were archived at The London Metropolitan Archives.

Parts of some Counties (such as Kent, Essex and Surrey) were absorbed into the GLC in 1965. Croydon was not part of the LCC. In 1965 the borders of the former Croydon Borough Council expanded to embrace parts of the former Surrey County Council and became the London Borough of Croydon.

***Q17: I placed my daughter for adoption through the HCAAS in 1969. I have tried to contact her through you many times since she became 18. I am told that the law has now changed and I can have contact with her. Can you arrange please?***

Adoption law has changed considerably since 1969. Most recently, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 has enabled adopted people to ask for and receive an Intermediary Service from an adoption support agency. Adopted people can be given identifying

information to allow them to try to trace their birth family. However, the same facility has not been extended to birth families, to ensure that the identity of the adopted person is protected. A birth relative like yourself can ask for an Intermediary service and an Intermediary Agency can try to trace your adopted daughter using identifying information from the adoption agency, but you will not be given the identifying information.

Your birth daughter will decide for herself if she wants contact with you. Adopted people can place vetoes on the adoption agency records to prevent or limit contact through either Absolute or Conditional Vetoes.

***Q18: I was born in 1943 and placed for adoption by The Mission of Hope. Someone told me that they are now called Christian Family Concern. I phoned them and they advised me to call you.***

The Mission of Hope and the Homeless Children's Aid and Adoption Society were separate adoption agencies but merged in the 1980s and became Christian Family Concern. The latter closed in 1992 and passed their records on to Croydon Council for safe keeping. We may have the archived records which relate to your adoption. We can check our archived adoption records.

***Q19: I was adopted through Christian Family Concern. I accessed my adoption records some years ago, but was not given the name of my birth father, who was not married to my birth mother and his name is not on my original birth certificate. I understand that adoption law has changed. Can I now be given the name of my birth father?***

Adoption law and practice has changed considerably over the years. Before the 1990s adoption agencies in England and Wales would usually not give the name of a putative (or assumed) birth father because paternity was not proven. However, it is now general practice to give this information, unless you live in Wales, where, for the moment, adoption law on this point does not allow adoption workers in Wales to give the name of a putative birth father. This is because of an administrative error at Government level when the Adoption and Children Act 2002 was implemented. Your putative birth father is so called because your mother said he was your father, but they were not married and he did not admit paternity in any other, such as by registering your birth or by paying maintenance.

***Q20: I am trying to complete my family history. I know that my grandmother, who was born in 1914, was adopted through The Mission of Hope or the Homeless Children's Aid and Adoption Society. Can I access her adoption records to find out about her birth family?***

It is Croydon's policy to provide information from archived adoption records to descendants of adopted people. You will need your grandmother's written consent, or, if she has died, that of her next of kin and you will need to provide a copy of her death certificate. You will need to write to us to provide more information and we can search our archives. You will also need to make contact with a post adoption support

worker in your area. We do not send information direct to adopted people or their descendents, only to approve adoption support workers.

Incidentally, if your grandmother was placed for adoption before 1927 she may not have been legally adopted, as the first Adoption act of 1926 was not implemented until January 1927. "Adoptions" before 1927, were usually informal "fostering" arrangements, sometimes supported by written agreements. Your grandmother may have been given the surname of her "adopters", but would not have had her surname changed legally by adoption, unless her "adopters" applied for an adoption order through the courts after 1926.

***Q21: I was adopted through The Mission of Hope at birth. I accessed my adoption records some years ago. I was not given any medical information. I now have a medical problem. Can I now be given medical information?***

We can access the archived adoption records which relate to your adoption again and see if any information was left out. You can only be given information about yourself, though we may get the consent of birth relatives to give information about themselves.

You need to remember that your birth parents may have been quite young when you were born and placed for adoption, so medical conditions which emerge in later life may not be recorded. You may be able to trace and have contact with your birth family and ask for medical information. You will need to do this through an Intermediary Adoption Agency.

***Q22: I have accessed my adoption records through Croydon Council. I would now like to trace and have contact with my birth family. Can you help me do this please?***

Croydon Council provides an Intermediary service for adopted people and birth relatives who live in Croydon. If you live outside Croydon you will need to apply for an Intermediary Adoption Service from the local authority where you live. Not all local authorities offer an Intermediary Adoption Service. However, you are entitled to be sign-posted to an Intermediary Adoption Agency if your local authority does not provide one.

Croydon Council adoption team does not provide a tracing service to try to find birth relatives. You will need to make your own arrangements for this.

CABRINI Adoption Service offers a tracing service for service users living within Croydon, and within the South London Consortium area, but referrals to Cabrini need to be made by the Post Adoption Worker here in Croydon Adoption.

***Q23; I was born in the 1930s at The Hall, Great Bentley, Essex. My birth was registered in Tendring Essex. I think I was adopted through The Homeless Children's Aid and Adoption Society. I wonder if you hold my adoption records?***

The Hall, or The Old Hall, or The Old Mill House (it's name changed from time time), on The Green, Great Bentley Essex, was a Private Nursing Home for Mother's and Babies which operated from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century until the late 1940s. Mothers to be went there from all over th country to have their baby, usually referred by a Church Social Worker or Hospital Almoner. Some mothers would have taken their babies back home with them but some children were placed for adoption. Successive matrons placed babies privately but many were placed with the Homeless Children's Aid and Adoption Society, usually going into Hutchison House, in Leytonstone, East London. Information on Hutchison House can be found at the Vestry House Museum, Leytonstone.

Essex County Archives might also have information on The Old Hall, but I understand that no care or medical notes from The Old Hall Have survived.

If you were placed for adoption through The Homeless Children's Aid and Adoption Society, Croydon may hold your archived adoption records.