



# The Social Work Service



## Who is this leaflet for?

This is a brief information leaflet for individuals considering seeking a tracing service through the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) and/or joining the Contact Preference Register (CPR).



## Who are we?

The Social Work Service in the AAI is a team of professionally qualified social workers, including Principal Social Worker and Social Work Team Leader. In accordance with the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 (BITA), our work includes providing a statutory tracing service on behalf of adoptees, birth parents and birth relatives and managing the CPR.

Social workers in the AAI understand that adoption is a life-long process which can generate a variety of emotions and needs for those involved.



## What is tracing?

Tracing involves a member of the social work team undertaking an active search to locate and contact a birth relative on your behalf. If you are considering tracing, we would encourage you to register on the CPR also as the person you are seeking to trace may already be on the CPR seeking contact.

Adoption records and other records relating to care arrangements, such as boarded out records, Mother and Baby Home or County Home Institution records, are held by Tusla - the Child and Family Agency and the AAI. All tracing applications are received by Tusla in the first instance. Generally, the organisation that holds your care records or the adoption agency record relating to your adoption will provide you with a tracing service.

Once your application form has been received by the AAI from Tusla, you will be sent an acknowledgement notice. Your application will be placed on a waiting list for allocation to a social worker. Once allocated, the social worker will make contact with you and arrange a meeting to help us better understand your tracing request and inform you of the processes involved.



## Tracing and the role of the AAI Social Worker

The decision to seek a tracing service is significant and can require preparation. As well as considering your reasons for and expectations of tracing, it is important to also reflect on the different possible outcomes and prepare yourself accordingly.



## Possible outcomes of tracing

There are a number of possible outcomes when tracing; these can include

- **Open to contact:** If we are successful in locating the person sought, there are different options on how to proceed with contact which your social worker can explore with you. Your birth relative may express an openness to contact and a wish for direct contact, where the social worker will facilitate the agreed exchange of your contact details. A person may prefer mediated contact, where the social worker will work as intermediary. These options will be discussed with you both. We recognise that this is not a linear process, and your social worker will be available to offer support throughout this process.
- **Unable to locate:** There are many different reasons why it may not be possible to locate the adopted person or a birth relative, such as the information on record being incorrect or insufficient to carry out a trace or the individual being sought may have moved abroad.
- **Non-response:** Sometimes the person being sought can feel unable to respond. Receiving a non-response can be a difficult outcome for the person initiating the trace to come to terms with as it can leave unanswered questions and may evoke complex emotions.
- **Unable to meet/not open to contact:** Sometimes the person being sought can feel unable for contact. Contact by letter or reunion meeting is voluntary, and it is important that a person's decision in this regard is respected.
- **Death:** Sadly, sometimes it may be discovered through a trace that the person you were hoping to have contact with has died.

It is important to remember that the person tracing will likely have spent time actively thinking about what is involved and has made a decision to activate the trace while the other person may need to take time to reflect on what it means for them to have been contacted. It is helpful to all involved in the process to respect the pace set by the person who wishes to go more slowly, being mindful of each person's perspective.



## What is the CPR?

The CPR is a way to enable people to register their preference in relation to contact with an adopted person or birth relative, as well as allowing them to lodge personal communications/items or contemporary information, including medical details.



## The CPR and the role of the AAI Social Worker

When two related people join the CPR, a match is generated based upon the information provided by the applicant and the information contained within historic adoption records.

This match is referred to the social work team where the case will be allocated to a social worker who will work with you regarding your wishes about the match.

Our general practice is to notify the person who joined the CPR first that a match has occurred and ascertain their current wishes. This is particularly important where they may have joined the CPR many years previously. When the social worker has made contact with the first party and clarified their preferences then the second person will be contacted.



## Possible outcomes when joining the CPR:

There are a number of outcomes that may occur when you join the CPR

- **Direct contact:** Some people prefer to go into direct contact with each other and may exchange contact details such as email addresses and/or phone numbers. In this case the social worker will confirm the preference of both parties and send a match letter containing each other's contact details.
- **Mediated contact:** Others may choose mediated contact where they can exchange information, letters and/or photographs via their social worker, or organise a meeting at the AAI offices in Dublin.
- **Information sharing:** Some people may prefer to share information only through the social worker. This can include medical and/or background information.
- **A non-response:** There may be no response where the contact details of one party may have changed and have not been updated.
- **A change of the other person's preferences:** It may be the case that an individual's preferences around contact may have changed from when they first registered, including where someone is no longer in a position for contact.

- **Death:** There is also the possibility that one party may have died in the intervening period. It is important to note that the AAI may not be aware of this event.
- **Unexpected match:** A match may occur with a birth relative other than the person whom you may be seeking.
- **No match:** There is no match with another person seeking contact.

Please note that the CPR is a passive register in that a match only occurs when both parties have registered a preference for contact on the CPR. If you wish to actively trace your birth relative, you can apply for a tracing service through [www.birthinfo.ie](http://www.birthinfo.ie)

**Having contact with a birth relative through engaging in tracing or the CPR, can be an emotional and complex process with different outcomes. Your social worker is there to offer support and assistance to all parties involved.**



## Useful links:

### **Barnardos**

<https://www.barnardos.ie/our-services/work-with-families/post-adoption-service/>

### **Irish Council of Social Workers in Adoption - ICSWA**

<https://councilofirishadoptionagencies.ie/>

### **TUSLA**

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/birth-information-and-tracing-and-adoption/>

### **Mother and Baby Homes Scheme**

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/2938d-the-mother-and-baby-institutions-payment-scheme/>