



2024-0020876

Janet Daby MP
Minister for Children and Families

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Vernon Smith
Chair, Gloucestershire County Council
By email: michelle.pidgeon@gloucestershire.gov.uk

31 July 2024

Dear Mr Smith,

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 July, addressed to the Secretary of State, regarding historical adoption practices. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

I have the deepest sympathy for the pain and distress caused to those affected by historical adoption practices. The treatment of women and their children during this period was wrong. I am sorry for the life-long impact that these practices had on adopted adults, their children, and wider families. I agree with the report that the treatment of many unmarried mothers and their children during this period should not have happened.

We have carefully considered each recommendation from the Joint Committee on Human Rights in their inquiry report and have committed to take action as outlined in our response. Further information is available at: tinyurl.com/33ZY35JJ. We have already amended regulations to make it easier for adults to access adoption support services. We have also written to local authorities, encouraging them to retain historical adoption records for 100 years instead of 75, to make access to records easier, and asking them to support access without undue delay to such records.

Those affected can access intermediary services, provided by local authorities, voluntary adoption agencies and registered adoption agencies, to help them trace their birth children or birth parents and establish whether contact is possible. Birth relatives and adopted adults can also add their details to the Adoption Contact Register at the General Register Office to find a birth relative or an adopted person. I recognise that many people adopted during this time have experienced challenges in accessing their adoption records.

The department has committed to writing to intermediary services to ensure that they are able to best serve people seeking information about their adoption records, birth family, or to establish contact with birth relatives in our response to the report.

Whilst the past cannot be undone, lessons of the time have been learned and have led to significant changes to legislation and practice. It has been clear in law for over 30 years that children are best brought up in their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives and with least recourse to legal proceedings, except where this is not consistent with their welfare.

Single parents are now supported to help ensure that children and their families stay together, and children are only removed permanently by a court, without the consent of the parents, if it is satisfied that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

I recognise that none of the above can change the heartbreak and impact of things done in the past. The practice was abhorrent and should never have taken place. We will explore what more can be done to support those impacted.

Thank you for writing to me about this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Daby." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

Janet Daby MP
Minister for Children and Families