



Department for Education

Janet Daby MP
Minister for Children and Families

Lord Alton of Liverpool
Chair of Joint Committee on Human Rights

By email: JCHR@parliament.uk

23 May 2025

Dear Lord Alton,

Thank you for your letter of 24 April 2025 regarding the commitments made by the previous government in response to the Joint Committee on Human Rights' report *The Violation of Family Life: Adoption of Children of Unmarried Women 1949-1976*. I welcome the Committee's continued focus on this important issue, and I am pleased to provide an update on the progress which continues to be made across the areas you highlighted.

Access to Records

The Department for Education wrote to all Regional Adoption Agencies, Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Local Authorities on 17 October 2022, reminding them of their legal obligations to respond to requests for adoption records in a timely manner. In addition, an article reiterating this message was included in the October 2023 edition of the DfE Local Authority Newsletter, which reaches all Directors of Children's Services in England.

Whilst the department has not undertaken a formal assessment of response times, I recognise that performance across the country remains variable. However, we are working closely with Adoption England to support improvements in this area. On 20 May, Adoption England published new guidance on access to records titled *Adoption: Information and Intermediary Services – A Practice Guide*. This guidance, clearly and accessibly set out, aims to support consistent and legally compliant practice, including covering intermediary services and the legislative framework and service provision for adoptions that took place under Pre-Commencement and Post-Commencement regulations.

Intermediary Services

I note the concerns raised regarding the quality and consistency of intermediary services. A letter addressing these issues – specifically the promotion of clear complaints procedures and the provision of advice to family members who do not wish to be contacted – was issued to key stakeholders on 2 May 2025.

The correspondence sets out our expectations for transparent, accessible

complaints processes and encourages services to ensure individuals are informed about the support available to them, including if they choose to reconsider their contact preferences in the future.

Linking Birth and Adoption Records

I recognise the distress that can result from the lack of a visible link between birth and adoption certificates. While we have not yet undertaken substantive work in this area, we continue to explore potential options. This is a legally and technically complex issue, and we remain committed to examining feasible approaches within existing legislative frameworks.

Next steps

We are funding Adoption England to deliver improvements in access to records and intermediary services, and following the launch of their new guidance on 20 May, we will continue to work with them to ensure that this work drives tangible service enhancements for those affected.

Thank you again for your ongoing scrutiny and commitment to this issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Janet Daby." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a trailing dot at the end.

Janet Daby MP
Minister for Children and Families