

House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS179)

Department for Education

Written Statement made by: **Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities (Bridget Phillipson)** on 02 Jul 2026.

Historic Forced Adoption

Today, the Prime Minister has delivered an Apology on behalf of the state for historic forced adoption practices in England. These practices, which predominantly occurred between 1949 and 1976, involved mostly young, unmarried women being coerced into having their babies taken from them.

The apology follows extensive engagement with campaign groups and individuals with lived experience.

Commitments to Action and Support

We know that, for many people, the consequences of these experiences have not diminished with time. An apology, while important, cannot undo the profound and lasting harm that was caused. Those affected have made it clear - powerfully and consistently - that healing and recognition require meaningful, practical support.

Today marks not an end point, but the beginning of a continuing commitment to address this legacy. The Government is determined to learn from this historic injustice and to improve access to support for those affected and their families. This includes improving access to records, strengthening specialist intermediary services, expanding trauma-informed support, and ensuring clearer routes to information and assistance.

We will continue to work closely with people with lived experience, experts and delivery partners to ensure that this acknowledgement is matched by meaningful and lasting change.

Today, the Government commits to a programme of measures worth £4m over 3 years to support those affected. Initial steps will include:

1. Transforming access to and safeguarding of adoption records

Extending record retention

We will consult on strengthening access to historic adoption information by extending the retention period for existing pre-2005 adoption case records to at least 100 years, bringing them into line with post-2005 requirements and helping to ensure records remain available throughout the lifetime of those affected.

Making access to records simpler and more transparent

We will fund the further development of a national platform, led by CoramBAAF in partnership with the Archives and Records Association, providing a single access point to a comprehensive

dataset of adoption and care records held by agencies, organisations and record offices.

Driving consistency and accountability

This will be reinforced through ministerial communications to local authorities, Regional Adoption Agencies and Voluntary Adoption Agencies, emphasising the importance of responding appropriately to information requests and in line with the Government-funded and endorsed 2025 *Adoption England Practice Guidance*. This includes improving transparency around response times and reducing unnecessary redaction.

2. Expanding access to specialist support and reconnection services

Strengthening access to advice and information

Through FamilyConnect, we will expand the national advice line to improve access to information and services for adopted adults, their descendants, birth parents and relatives seeking information, support or reconnection. This will include advice on any funding that may be available to assist them.

We will also support the development of dedicated areas within the FamilyConnect website, providing tailored information, guidance and resources for adult adoptees, birth parents, relatives and professionals.

Funded intermediary services

We will provide funded intermediary services for historic adoption cases that took place between 1949 and 1976. In line with existing regulations, which allow prioritisation of adoptions before 12 November 1975, ensuring those with the greatest need are supported to access information, trace relatives and pursue reconnection safely and sensitively.

A national peer support offer

We will establish national virtual peer-support groups for birth parents and adopted adults, improving access to ongoing, trauma-informed support regardless of where people live.

3. Strengthening access to trauma-informed NHS services

Improving access and clinician understanding

We will work with NHS England and those affected by historic forced adoption practices to co-produce practical tools and guidance that:

- Recognise their experiences and help clinicians understand the impact of forced adoption.
- Clearly set out the support that may be relevant and improve referral and triage pathways.
- Support individuals to access the care most appropriate to their needs.
- Improve consistency across GP services, NHS 111 and NHS Talking Therapies.
- Recognise the implications of unknown family medical histories, including when considering health screening and referrals for genetic testing.

Better recognition within care pathways

We will improve clinician awareness and provide practical guidance to support the identification of forced adoption experiences within patient histories, helping to inform appropriate care, referrals and signposting. This will support affected individuals to access the full range of NHS services in a way that recognises and responds to their experiences.

Exploring the option of a health record marker

NHS England will explore how individuals can choose to have their experience of forced adoption appropriately recorded within their health records, where they wish to do so. This could help clinicians take that experience into account when considering:

- Care and treatment decisions.
- Family medical history.
- Wider health and support needs.

4. Recognition and Voice

We will commission a testimonials project to preserve and share the experiences of those affected by historic forced adoption practices, ensuring that their voices continue to be heard and that the lessons of the past are not forgotten.

We will also gather evidence on the effectiveness of the measures announced today and keep the need for further research under review.

5. Accountability

We will establish a reference group comprising people with lived experience of historic forced adoption practices to help review progress and provide ongoing challenge and insight as these commitments are delivered.

Closing

We offer this apology and package of support in the hope that it brings recognition, understanding and a measure of healing to those affected.

Today, we acknowledge a profound wrong.

On behalf of the Government, we say clearly and unequivocally: what happened was wrong. It should never have happened. We are deeply sorry.