

Intercountry Adoption: a UK Perspective on Post-adoption Issues

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Presentation outline

- 1. Post Adoption Services Provided in UK**
- 2. Consider the views of adoptive parents and adult adoptees**
- 3. Briefly consider the needs of birth parents**
- 4. What can be done to improve services?**

Post Adoption Services

- **Adoption & Children Act 2002 – obligation to assess the support needs of adoptive families**
- **Services provided for adopters, adoptees & birth parents**
- **Types of services provided**

Types of Services Provided

- **Adoption allowances**
- **Respite care**
- **Courses**
- **Post box contact**
- **Support groups**
- **Independent support workers**

What adoptive families say

- **Support Groups**
- **Health Issues**
- **Racism/Bullying**
- **Identity and difference**
 - *Returning to the country of origin*
 - *Search and reunion*

Support Groups

- *Different types of group*
 - Pre-adoption information giving & support
 - OASIS
 - Country specific
 - ARC
 - Guatemalan Families Associations
 - Post adoption support
 - AFAA
 - PNPIC

Benefits of group membership

“It was very useful because we were all going through various difficulties and it was nice to know there was somebody in the same situations as you. It was just such a relief to know that you were not the only one.”

“We have been to a lot of meetings over the last five years. We have a number of good friends who have adopted from Guatemala. I really think it’s important. It’s a good thing for information about cultural things and information about Guatemala. Good friendships.”

Importance of medical support

What parents had to say:-

“The children had scabies, colds and coughs and required some medical attention. One of our daughters had second degree malnutrition caused by her mother’s extreme state of poverty.”

“...very poorly. He would have died – 10 weeks premature weighing 1kg. Also chest and eye infections.”

“...on the point of death from starvation and disease.”

Bullying and Racism

- An 18yr old adoptee from Sri Lanka:

“I used to get racism when I was younger. I got called ‘nigger, a Paki’ and I turned and said, ‘I’m not Pakistani, so how can I be a Paki?’ and they said to me, ‘oh you’re all the same, you’re Black.’ But now they wouldn’t because they know better, but back then when they did it, it did hurt.”

Identity and Difference

- **One adoptive father said**

“Sometimes I have noticed our daughter’s friends look at me and ask, ‘oh, is that your dad?’ Just the other day she was with me and she sussed out this kid was a bit confused and she said, ‘I’m adopted you know’. There have been a lot of people over the years who ask how we came to adopt from abroad.”

Identity, Search and Reunion

- **Returning to the birth country**
- **Birth information**
- **Search and reunion**

Dilemmas of Search & Reunion

- **Adoptees' right to know about origins**
- **The right to trace**
- **Homeland visits**
- **Contact after reunion**

Return Visits: parents' views

“We have been back to visit the country twice and it was a valuable cultural reminder and wonderful holiday experience. We talk about Thailand regularly.”

“The benefit to us as parents is that we can see how well our children ‘fit in’ to their birth society and country.”

Contact after Reunion

- **A number of studies in the UK have looked at the pattern of continued contact after a reunion – and whether this is affected by WHO initiated the search (Howe & Feast 2000, Triseliotis et al 2005)**
- **In States of origin, this issue has not been systematically studied but there are some signs that adoptees do not continue contact after a homeland visit where they meet birth parents**

When may support be most needed?

- **Post-arrival (e.g. early intervention re health and promoting attachment)**
- **Starting school**
- **Adolescence**
- **Leaving home**
- **Becoming a parent**
- **At any stage in the process of search and reunion**

Needs of Birth Mothers

- **Pressures to relinquish**
- **Birth mothers never forget**
- **The orphan myth**
- **The right to know about their children**

What kind of Services?

- **Mainstream multidisciplinary services which are intercountry-adoption-aware and intercountry-adoption positive**
- **Specialist services located in both the statutory and NGO sector (including both professional and those led by members of the adoption triangle)**
- **Availability of choice between (e.g.) informal and formal services**

Final Thoughts

- **The need for a fully co-operative approach between receiving countries and countries of origin**
- **For adoptive families post-adoption support starts with preparation**
- **For birth families before the relinquishment**
- **Where will the funds come from?**

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