



## **Adoption Rights Alliance Media Guide**

In response to concerns expressed by adopted people and natural parents in contact with us, Adoption Rights Alliance has put together this Media Guide to assist those who may wish to share their stories with the media.

### **Are you ready?**

Before you continue, we suggest that you take the time to consider whether you are ready to publicly share your story. If you are in the midst of your trace for example, or if you are at the beginning of your reunion, you might decide that the time is not right for you. On the other hand, some find the experience of sharing their story to be empowering and a way to share their good news; and indeed, for those encountering difficulties tracing (particularly with illegal adoptions) some find that going to the media might help in making progress.

**If you do decide to proceed, that decision should be made freely and not because of any kind of pressure exerted upon you. – Remember it is okay to say no!**

### **Respect**

First and foremost, you are entitled to be respected by the person who is interviewing you and you should not feel shy about demanding that respect.

### **Anonymity**

Some people are in a position where they would like to tell their story but they are unsure if they would like their names in the public domain. If this applies to you, we suggest that you make it very clear to the journalist beforehand and if the interview is for television, ensure that you are happy with the set up – e.g. if your voice will be changed or an actor used, if your face will be blurred or in shadow. Remember, it is

perfectly in order for you to ask questions and say that you are uncomfortable if this is the case. If you are still unsure but would like your story on record, please feel free to contact us at [research@adoptionrightsalliance.com](mailto:research@adoptionrightsalliance.com) about the Adoption Oral History Project, where you can tell your story anonymously and on your terms.

### **Pre-planning**

Before proceeding, you should decide what you are happy to say and what you are uncomfortable discussing. If something is a 'no-go' area, remember it is okay to say no and ask the interviewer to move on. It might also be helpful, particularly in the case of a live interview, if you let the producer know beforehand if there is something you do not wish to be asked.

### **Location**

If you would like the interview conducted in a particular location, do not be afraid to ask for this.

### **Phone numbers**

Most radio outlets ask for a landline number as it is likely to be of better quality. If you are not comfortable handing out your landline number just say you don't have one so you are not pressured into giving it. We also strongly suggest that you do not distribute your phone number further than you have to and ensure that you stipulate that it is not handed to anyone else by the journalist without your express permission.

### **Corrections**

Many media interviews (both television and radio) are pre-recorded and in the case of newspaper/magazine interviews, the journalist will take notes. While this is certainly less pressured than a live interview, you should be aware that things you say can be taken out of context. Therefore we recommend that you ask to see a copy of the finished product before it is aired or gone to print. If you are unhappy, do not be afraid to submit clarifications.

## **What is an exclusive?**

An exclusive is where a media organisation asks you not to go on any other show/paper until they have run your story themselves.

## **'Hard news' versus 'soft news'**

While most media outlets will want access to personal stories (known as 'soft news stories'), it is also preferable to include a 'hard news' element to the story (i.e. information about the campaign for equal rights by opening adoption records) in whatever piece is being put together. If you do decide to tell your story, you can help with this by explaining that adopted people do not have automatic access to their birth certificates and files and by offering your views on this. Again, if you are motivated to tell your story to further the campaign for equality, Adoption Rights Alliance would strongly recommend that you impress upon the journalist the importance of approaching us for a comment.

## **What journalists to work with**

If you are uncomfortable working with a particular journalist or a particular publication/media outlet, it is okay to say no to this person/outlet in favour of another. More often than not, adopted people and natural parents tend to trust those journalists who have worked on the topic for a long time and who have proven their trustworthiness.

If you are approached by more than one publication or by more than one journalist and you are unsure which one to deal with, the first thing you need to consider is whether you wish to speak with just one journalist or if you are happy to deal with more than one media outlet (unless you have been asked and agree to an exclusive, which typically happens with larger media organisations). You should also think about your motivations for doing the interview – if you simply wish to share your story for your own personal reasons, then your decision will be guided by that. If you are sharing your story to further your cause, then you might decide that a local station/newspaper has a better chance of yielding results. If you are sharing your story because you wish to assist in furthering the campaign for equality, and you wish to pick just one media outlet/journalist, we would advise that you choose a larger publication/station with wider coverage.

### **Authenticity of projects**

If you are invited to take part in a documentary or in-depth piece which involves opening up significantly about your life story, we strongly advise that you clarify that the project is actually going ahead before you commit to divulging your personal story. If you give your story to a project that does not go ahead immediately, we strongly recommend that you make your wishes clear about how your interview is treated in the future. For example, you may want your interview to be destroyed, but if not you should ask to be informed before it is used in the future.

### **Ending the interview**

It is okay to end the interview at any time, especially if you feel uncomfortable.

### **Photographs**

You have the right to refuse a photograph if you are uncomfortable with this. We also suggest that you ensure your Facebook and other social media photos are set to private so that they are not obtained by media outlets who do not take the time to ask.

### **Control over your story**

You should be aware that even if you agree to give your story to only one journalist, it is still possible for your story to be used by other media outlets. E.g. in the case of a radio interview, transcripts are often used as quotes or portions of newspaper or magazine interviews can be quoted – again, with photographs from social media to accompany the story.

### **Intermediary**

If you would like someone from Adoption Rights Alliance to act as an initial intermediary while you make your decision on whether to speak to the media, we would be happy to help, though please bear in mind that we are volunteers and do not have much free time, so our availability is extremely limited. If you are having difficulty with a member of the media bothering you, please let us know and we can advise you further.