

# **Birthlink is celebrating – 111 years old this year**

## **The charity Birthlink has two shops in Edinburgh one at Lower Gilmore Place and the other in Bruntsfield**

The well established thrift shops have a very simple ethos – nothing is ever wasted, and very little goes to landfill.

In 1957 the first Thrift shop was founded to contribute to the organisation's funds. It started off with three members of staff and the following year the charity bought Number 6 Bruntsfield Place and had four members of staff. A big celebration was held in 2017 to mark the 60th anniversary of the oldest thrift shop in Scotland. Staff and volunteers dressed up for the occasion.

The charity began in November 1911 and was founded as the Eastern Division of the National Vigilance Association of Scotland by a group of well-known Edinburgh citizens – including Dr Elsie Inglis. The Association conducted community based work, mainly providing temporary shelter to women and girls in need.

In 1941 the organisation changed its name to the Guild of Service for Women and its main purpose was to Advise and befriend women and children in any difficulty by means of individual case work. The students at the University of Edinburgh's School of Social Studies were given practical training by the Guild. This link with universities continues supporting social work placements. The charity then opened Edzell Lodge which was a family group home with house parents working with social workers and about a dozen children. The

Guild of Service moved to 21 Castle Street in 1954 becoming a registered adoption agency. The Guild supported and organised adoption placements for more than twenty years and supported foster carers.

The next phase of the charity's work began in the late seventies early eighties when it began to support people enquiring about their own origins and connecting with their birth family.

There had been discussion around a centralised contact register in relation to adoption for a number of years and Family Care started getting more interest in this from adopted people and birth relatives. This was formalised in consultation with the Registrar General as well as voluntary organisations and local authorities. There was a consensus that the work would require an element of "counselling" or support and the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland was officially established in 1984. This is where the name Birthlink came from which is now the charity's name.

Anyone who was born or adopted in Scotland or has a relative who was born or adopted in Scotland that they are looking to trace can register on the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland to register their wish for contact.

To date there have been over 11,000 registrations on the Adoption Contact Register for Scotland. Whenever there is a link, a bell is rung in the charity's office. This year so far, they have had 23 links.

If you are an adult who has been affected by adoption with a Scottish connection – an adopted adult, a birth parent or relative, or an adoptive relative and have any questions or wish to talk things through please contact the charity on 0131 225 6441 or at [mail@birthlink.org.uk](mailto:mail@birthlink.org.uk)

<https://www.facebook.com/BirthlinkScot>



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