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# 'Just say sorry', say forcibly adopted women



Helen Weston has been diagnosed with PTSD after being taken from her mother at 12 days old and forcibly adopted

**Fiona Irving & Jody Sabral**, BBC News, South East and **Cash Murphy**, BBC News, South East

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**Two Kent women who were removed from their mothers when they were just weeks old and forcibly adopted say they need the government to formally apologise in order to help them recover from the trauma.**

"Why can't they just say sorry? They haven't got the guts," said Helen Weston from Yalding who was taken from her 15-year-old mother when she was 12 days old.

Nikki Paine, from Ashford, who was adopted at six weeks old, and was diagnosed with PTSD, says she just wants an acknowledgement of what happened to her.

A demonstration is due to take place on Wednesday to urge the government to apologise to the hundreds of people forcibly adopted during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s as well as their mothers.

An inquiry by the human rights select committee, undertaken in 2021, looked at the experiences of children adopted across this period because their parents were either underage or not married.

Published in July 2022, its report recommended a formal apology after finding that babies were taken from mothers who did not want to let them go.

The Welsh and Scottish governments have officially apologised to those affected by forced adoptions, but the UK government so far has not.

## 'Wracked with guilt'

Ms Weston said: "If we get the validation then maybe my birth mother won't be so wracked with guilt and shame and keeping this dreadful secret."

She was adopted in 1967 after her teenage mother was forced to give her up.

She says it has had a profound impact on her life and was diagnosed with complex PTSD.

"I'm not angry with anybody, I think that's why I get so depressed," she said.

"If there was one person I could be angry at, if one person was responsible, then I could give them a gob full and get rid of it.

"They genuinely thought they were doing the best for us."



Ms Paine, who has also been diagnosed with complex PTSD, will be among those demonstrating in Westminster on Monday.

She said: "We're all suffering from anxiety, we're all on antidepressants.

"The apology would get the mental health support and that's really important."

She said: "We want this to be recognised because they took me away from my mother.

"I'm 63-years-old and it's still affecting my life."

## 'I wanted my real mum'

Wednesday's protest has been organised by adoptee advocate Zara Phillips, and is supported by the Movement for an Adoption Apology.

According to the group, between 1945 and 1976 an estimated 215,000 women had their children taken away from them.

A spokesperson for the group said: "We are all growing older and time is running out.

"We have been ignored by successive governments and now urgently need a public apology for this very personal and painful lifelong trauma."

They said: "A public apology would help mothers and adoptees change the narrative around what was done to them.

"It would acknowledge the injustice and the loss which will endure for the rest of their lives."

Some adoptees say they feel like they do not belong in their adoptive families especially when their adoptive parents have their own birth children.

Ms Weston said: "I was adopted into a family who had two children of their own, the dynamic with my adopted family was that I was always a problem child," said Mrs Weston.

Ms Paine echoed this sentiment, saying: "I told my mother that she never hugged me, but she said you never wanted me to, and I thought how can you say that, but of course I wanted my real mum."

The Department for Education has been approached for a comment.

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