



# Contact after adoption

Letterbox and other forms of post  
adoption contact



**One**  
Adoption  
Agency  
WEST YORKSHIRE

## What is post adoption contact?

When a child has been adopted, it is likely that there will be some form of contact or keeping in touch arrangement in place. This could be direct contact (face-to-face, over the telephone or other digital platform) or indirect (via a letter or email), which is often called 'letterbox contact'.

At the moment there is no legal requirement for adoptive families to maintain contact of any kind with their child's birth family after the adoption order has gone through (unless a specific court order is made about contact). However, research shows that contact can have major long term benefits for people who have been adopted therefore we encourage people who have adopted through One Adoption to actively participate in contact agreements. The contact arrangements are discussed before the child's adoption and a voluntary agreement between the two families will normally be arranged.

The extent and form of contact will be determined by what is in the best interests of the child. If anyone involved wishes to change the terms of the contact agreement, they can ask for it to be reviewed.

## Why is contact important after adoption?

Contact allows the child to keep in touch with significant family members, to know that they are safe and well and hear about their lives. When contact works well it can help adopted children to develop a realistic picture of their birth relatives, help with feelings of loss or rejection and to know their whole identity is respected and valued – their birth identity and their identity as an adopted child. Research has shown that when adopted children are helped to understand their history and value their birth identity, they are more likely to feel accepted and thrive.

Adoptive parents value contact with birth relatives as a way of reducing the child's sense of loss or rejection, answering their questions and keeping up to date with changes in the birth family.

Contact can help to reassure birth relatives about how the child is getting on, provide an opportunity for them to try and ease the child's sense of loss or rejection and keep in touch with their development.

Successful contact can help to prepare everybody involved for future meetings during childhood or in adulthood.

# What is letterbox contact and how does it work?

Our letterbox service provides a confidential, indirect way for adopted children to receive information about their birth family and for birth relatives to receive up to date information about the adopted child.

A letterbox arrangement will be set up by the adoption social worker. They will talk to the adoptive family and the birth family about how the arrangement will work and when it will happen. They will also discuss what can be sent, names to be used and support needed. When this is decided all parties will be asked to sign an agreement.

Once the agreements are signed, the letterbox service will support and manage the ongoing exchange of letters.

When your letter is due you will need to confirm your address with us by email, telephone or post. We will not forward any letters until we receive this. If you are waiting for a letter that is overdue, it may be that you have not confirmed your address so please get in touch.

The best way to send your letter is by email as an attachment, but you could send it by post. We will then forward this on to the other party, providing they have confirmed their address with us. Our contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

The adoptive parents will consider an appropriate time to share the letter with the child. Adoptive parents may feel that the child is not ready for certain information; however, they can keep the letter safe until they are ready. Sometimes children prefer to write their own letter, and sometimes they want their parents to do this for them.

We will not read the letters you send unless you request this. We will continue to manage the exchange of letters until your child is 18 and may continue to do so beyond 18 by agreement

## **What sort of news should I send?**

Your letter should be a sharing of information so you can hear about what day to day life is like for the other party, share important news and get to know each other better. You may want to write about interests, hobbies, personality, holidays, work, health and other family members.

It is important to think about the possible impact of the information you share. How would you feel reading this letter? If you are unsure about this, please contact the letterbox service for advice.

Writing letters to a stranger is not easy and both birth relatives and adopters often need support with this.

If you would like to see some examples of letters you can see some on our website: [www.oneadoption.co.uk](http://www.oneadoption.co.uk)

## Frequently Asked Questions

What should I do if it's not working?

If you have any worries about your letterbox arrangement please contact us. We will do everything we can to help.

What if the news I receive is distressing or difficult?

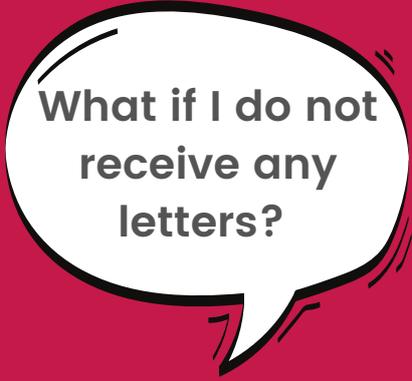
There may be times when you receive information that is difficult to hear or you may have news to share that you think may be upsetting. If this happens please contact us for advice and support.

What if I don't send any letters?

It can be hard to continue to write letters, particularly if you don't receive any in return. However it will help your child to know that you understood the importance of keeping the link between both of their families open. You can start writing letters at any time. So even if you haven't sent letters for a few years, when you feel able to start writing, please contact us for support with this.

## more Frequently Asked Questions

We know it can be difficult or disappointing when you do not receive a letter as agreed, but it could be for one of many reasons and does not necessarily mean something is wrong. We will try to make contact with the other party to offer support. We would ask you to continue to send your letters and it may be that, in the future, you start to get letters again.



What if I do not receive any letters?



What if I cannot send my letter in time?

We understand that sometimes life becomes busy. If you think you are going to be late sending your news, please let us know so that we can contact the other party to let them know.

This will be agreed at the start of the arrangement. If you later feel this needs to change please contact us and we can discuss your concerns. Unfortunately we are not be able to forward on any parcels.



What can I send?

## More Frequently Asked Questions

Can I get help with reading or writing letters?

Yes. Please let us know if you need some help with this.

We do not want your information to go to the wrong person, therefore we will not send out any letters until you confirm your address with us. We will hold onto it until we hear from you.

What happens if I don't confirm my address or contact details?

What about confidentiality?

We treat all information received carefully. We will not disclose your information to the other party. We will keep a basic record about the exchange. It is your responsibility not to place photographs or other information received via the letterbox service onto social media.

**NOTES...**

**DATE OF EXCHANGE...**

**Letterbox@oneadoptionwy.leeds.gov.uk**

**0113 378 3535**

**[www.oneadoption.co.uk](http://www.oneadoption.co.uk)**



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