



Contact after adoption

Post adoption contact



One
Adoption
Agency
NORTH & HUMBER

What is post adoption contact?

When a child has been adopted, 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'. The contact may be with birth parents, siblings, birth grandparents or other significant people.

Research shows that contact can have major long term benefits for people who have been adopted and it is expected that people who have adopted through One Adoption will actively participate in contact agreements. The contact arrangements are discussed before the child's adoption and an agreement drawn up about how the contact will take place.

The extent and form of contact will be determined by what is in the best interests of the child. If anyone involved thinks it would be better for the child for changes to be made, they can ask for it to be reviewed.

Why is contact important after adoption?

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. 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.

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 face-to-face contact and how does it work?

It is hoped that adoptive families and birth families will have the opportunity to meet each other, either in person or through virtual means. This often happens for the first time when the child first moves in with their adoptive family but can take place at other times too. We understand that some people feel anxious about this and you will be supported by social workers. Adoptive parents and birth relatives tell us how valuable they have found these meetings. It is an opportunity to share information about the child and their background. These meetings can include birth grandparents as well.

Regular face-to-face contact is often part of the contact arrangement for children who have birth siblings living elsewhere. These relationships are an important part of a child understanding something of their own history. It is not unusual for adoptive families and foster families (caring for the siblings) to meet up by informal arrangement throughout the year and exchange cards and gifts at birthdays and Christmas.

We offer support to everyone involved in face-to-face contact. While it may not have been part of the original contact agreement, it may develop over time, depending on the child's needs. The opportunities for 'virtual' face-to-face contact are increasing and it is often used for children to keep in touch with their birth relatives when they are not living with them.

What is letterbox contact and how does it work?

Our letterbox services provide 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 when a child is placed for adoption. Social workers 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 agreement is signed, the letterbox services will support and manage the ongoing exchange of letters.

When your letter is due you may be asked to confirm your address by email, telephone or post. 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 ways to send your letters are by post or email (as an attachment). We will then forward this on to the other party and they too may be asked to confirm their address.

Adoptive parents will consider when it is an appropriate time to share the letters with their child. They may feel that their 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 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

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 so 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 confidential details in the letter you send. We also ask that you do not put any information you receive via the letterbox service onto social media.

NOTES...

DATE OF EXCHANGE...

OANH.RAA@york.gov.uk

0345 305 2576

www.oneadoption.co.uk



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