



## Writing your letterbox letter guidance for birth family

## Your child is moving to a new adoptive family and you are going to have letterbox contact.

Writing letters can be hard at the best of times but especially in this situation. You might not have written a letter in years. You might never have written a letter. This leaflet will hopefully help you to think about what might be helpful to include in your letter, and what might be more difficult, especially when you first start writing.

We know that it can be easier talking to someone face to face. If you would like to talk to someone about your letterbox contact there are contact details at the end of this leaflet.

### Do

- Write to your child and their new family. It will be important for your child to know you are ok and it will help them to settle and be happy.
- Build a relationship with your child's adoptive parents through your letters – there may be information you want to share with them over the years and they may need to seek information from you over the years. You share a common interest in the children and getting things right for them.



## What helps

- Letterbox contact can be positive and helpful for everyone in adoption. It helps for children to maintain links with their birth family, gives them an understanding of their past, and it helps them to feel more confident by understanding their whole identity and their journey. It is also a prompt for families to talk together about adoption, keeping their life story going.
- The exchange of letters helps to build a relationship with your child's adoptive parents through the letters. This is important and you may want to share information with them over the years, and they may want to ask questions too. You all share a common interest in the children and getting things right for them.
- The letters help your child to know that their birth family members are ok, and the letters will help them to settle and be happy with their new family. The letters also let you know that the child is safe and well. It really helps children to know that the exchange will happen at a regular time, for example, once a year in June.
- The exchange of information will be helpful to both you, and the adoptive family over the years. This could be if you want to pass on medical information which may be hereditary or may be something that affects only you. It also helps for children to have information about family members passing away. This may be shared later, but it means that the information won't be a shock in the future.
- The letters help children to understand what is happening for you now. Do you have a job, are you enjoying a new hobby or sport, what is important in your life? Children may be really good at music or dancing, and this might be something that you enjoyed as a child so you could ask them about their hobbies, school, interests, pets and friends.
- It helps if you can remember not to include any distinguishing information in the letter. If this happens then the Letterbox Coordinator may have to contact you, or send the letter back to be amended. You can ring for advice if you are worried about something you want to include but you aren't sure if it is ok.
- Telling your child that you love them and want them to be happy in their adoptive family is really helpful to them. It gives them comfort to know you are thinking of them and helps them build a solid foundation on which to build their lives.



## What is difficult

- Sometimes it is hard to write, but just as you look forward to your letters, so do children and their families. Please don't avoid writing. You can contact the Letterbox Coordinator for help to write, or just for general advice about what you want to write. Their details are at the end of this leaflet.
- When you are thinking about your early letters, you may want to explain the reasons why your child was placed for adoption. They will have a Life Story Book and a Later Life Letter which explains this. Letterbox is not about explaining the past but about maintaining a link which can help your child feel settled and happy.
- It can be difficult to understand why you are asked to sign your letters with your first name. Adopted children now call someone else Mum or Dad and it is important that they are not confused by the letters, or they make them feel uncomfortable or unsettled in their new life.

## Example letter from birth family to adopters

Tip - remember not to include your address

Dear (name of adopter(s))

Thank you for the letter that you have sent. I am so pleased to hear that Thomas is doing well.

Since I last wrote, I have started voluntary work. I am working in a shop. I sell lots of different sorts of household goods. I really like my job and meet lots of people. I wonder what Thomas will do when he grows up?

Some more exciting news is that I have a dog now, he is called Fred. He is very gentle and loves to go for walks with me. Fred is brown and he is very cute.

I loved your last update and couldn't believe how much Thomas has grown.

I am so pleased that Thomas is enjoying his new school and has made some many friends. It will be lovely in your next update, if you could let me know how he is doing with his schoolwork.

It sounds like you had a lovely holiday, and I am so pleased that Thomas enjoys swimming. I have always thought that it is really important that children learn to swim when they are little. I enjoy swimming but I don't go to the pool as often as I would like to.

I'm going on holiday too this week, to the Lake District, which will be nice.

I look forward to receiving your next update.

With best wishes

Jayne

## Do

- Remember not to put your address or distinguishing information in your letters. This will mean that the letterbox coordinator will need to send the letter back to you, which will mean a delay for your child receiving your letter, or will have to cut out the information which will make the letter look strange to your child.
- Share information about new children in your family. This is important information for your child who needs to know about new brothers and sisters before they grow up so there are no great surprises in the future for them. It is important to think carefully about how you explain what is to happen to new brothers and sisters – if they will be living with you or not. The letterbox coordinator will be able to help you find the words to explain in such a way that your adopted child can understand if things are different for you this time.



## Don't

- Avoid answering letters. If you are worried that you don't know what to write contact the letterbox coordinator who will be able to help you or will be able to arrange for you to meet with the independent social worker for birth families who will help you with your letter.
- Try to explain the reasons why your child was placed for adoption in their regular letter. They will have a Later Life Letter and Life Story Book which will explain about this. Letterbox is not about explaining the past but about maintaining a link which can help your child feel settled and happy.



## Find out more

### Who can I speak to?

Adoption Support Team

Children's Services

Cumbria House

117 Botchergate

Carlisle

CA1 1RD

t: **03033 331216**

w: [cumbria.gov.uk/adoption](http://cumbria.gov.uk/adoption)

British Agency for Adoption and Fostering

– Advice page

w: [www.baaf.org.uk/info/advice](http://www.baaf.org.uk/info/advice)

If you require this document in another format (e.g. CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone 0300 303 2992

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে 0300 303 2992 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

如果您希望通过母语了解此信息，  
请致电 0300 303 2992

**Jeigu norétumėte gauti šią informaciją savo kalba,  
skambinkite telefonu 0300 303 2992**

**W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę  
zatelefonować pod numer 0300 303 2992**

**Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua,  
telefone para o 0300 303 2992**

**Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde görmek istiyorsanız lütfen  
0300 303 2992 numaralı telefonu arayınız**