



# Writing Your Staying In Touch Letter

## Guidance for Adopters



0303 333 1216



[adoptioncumbria.org.uk](http://adoptioncumbria.org.uk)



## What is staying in touch?

**Congratulations! You have been approved as adopters for Adoption Cumbria.**

**When you are matched with a child you will be asked to participate in “Staying in touch” contact.**

Staying in touch is the arrangement that helps birth families and adoptive parents keep in touch and exchange information. Adopted children have said that this contact often meets their need for up-to-date information and reassures them about the wellbeing of their birth family. It provides information which will be very important in helping them to understand their origins and know who they are in later years.

The service is confidential, and Adoption Cumbria’s staying in touch coordinator acts as a go between, so the two families can write to each other without knowing their personal details. All letters must also be screened to make sure they do not have anything inappropriate in them.

The arrangement is made between the adults on behalf of the children, though the children can sometimes contribute by including a drawing, or a handprint, and they may even write something when they are older, if they want to.

Arrangements are always made with the child’s best interests at heart. We recognise that contact needs fluctuate and change over the years and arrangements will need to be flexible.

This leaflet explains why staying in touch contact is a good idea and gives some helpful hints for your letters. If you wish, we can also let you have some anonymised letters that other adopters and birth family members have agreed we can share with people writing a letter for the first time.

## How staying in touch helps

**Contact with significant birth relatives can be really important in maintaining a positive link for your child with his or her past.**

It can help them understand more about their background, know about changes and events in their birth family, accept what has happened and have a realistic view, and prepare them for contact if they should want this in the future.

Information can be shared both ways, which can be an investment in your child’s future wellbeing.



**For you as an adopter, exchanging information can help you to:**

- Find out information not available at the time of the adoption (e.g. about a medical condition which has occurred after your child's adoption, and which may be hereditary).
- Give answers to your child's questions and share up-to-date information.
- Have a chance to share your own thoughts and feelings with birth relatives. This may make any future contact easier for you and others involved.
- Be reminded to talk about issues of adoption openly with your child and to build up a pattern of communication.
- Have an even better understanding of your position as adoptive parents.

**A positive staying in touch relationship means you can also help the birth family to:**

- Be reassured the child is safe, well and loved.
- Find out important information about your child, their health and progress.
- Inform the child about changes in their own lives.
- Keep in touch with your child and their adoptive family.
- Remember that the child is growing and developing.
- Prepare for the possibility of contact.

## Taking the right approach

**Build a relationship with your child's birth parents through your letters.**

Address the birth parents by their first names and sign your letters. There may be information you want to seek from them or share with them over the years. You share a common interest in the children and getting things right for them.

**Write your letter on time.**

It can be so hard for someone who is waiting for a letter if it is late, and they don't know why. If there is a problem, moving house, exam time, health problems or something else, get in touch with the Staying in Touch Coordinator and ask that they pass the message on.

**Take care not to put your address or distinguishing information in your letters.**

This will mean that the Staying in Touch Coordinator will need to send the letter back to you, which will cause a delay, or will have to cut out the information - which will make the letter look strange.



**Don't sign an agreement you don't intend to stick to.**

If you don't agree with some aspect of the Contact Agreement, say so right away so that your concerns can be resolved.

## What to write about

**The information you send will depend on who you are sending to and their past relationship with your child and perhaps with yourselves. It may need to be different for each of several birth relatives.**

Share news about the children, including their achievements, and some of the things they have been doing over the year. Encourage the children to send pictures they have done or pieces of artwork. This will help them to participate in a meaningful way at a level appropriate for them.

Birth families will be interested in:

- Your child's health and development, their looks and personality.
- Their progress at school and friendships, and how they get on with friends and family.
- Their hobbies, interests, pets, and what they are good at.
- Your child's daily life (for example favourite food, TV programmes, things they say, etc.).
- Your feelings about being a parent to your child, your thoughts about the birth family's feelings, or your child's comments about their adoption or their past.
- Any changes in your family, for example new brothers or sisters, house moves.

## If things get difficult

**Please don't avoid answering letters from the Staying in Touch Coordinator.**

If you don't feel the staying in touch arrangements are working well, discuss your reasons with the Staying in Touch Coordinator, who will try to help. The child's needs are the most important consideration when making arrangements and as long as we can discuss things we can ensure that the staying in touch arrangements are meeting your child's needs.

**Let us know if difficult things happen in your own family which will affect the staying in touch arrangements.**

We do understand if you feel unable to write for a period of time. If you are able to let us know we can let birth family know, which helps them to stop worrying about why the letters have stopped coming.



### Ask for support if you receive difficult information.

If a letter contains news about the birth of further brothers or sister we will telephone you or write to you before passing the letter on. We recognise this is sensitive, but it is important information for your child, who needs to know about new brothers and sisters before she or he grows up - so there are no great surprises in the future.

## Find out more

### Who can I speak to?

Adoption Support Team  
Children's Services  
Cumbria House  
107-117 Botchergate  
Carlisle  
CA1 1RZ

Tel: 03033 331216

[adoptioncumbria.org.uk](http://adoptioncumbria.org.uk)

British Agency for Adoption and Fostering – Advice Page

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



If you require this document in another format (eg CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone **0303 333 1216**

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如果您希望通过母语了解此信息，  
请致电 01228 606060

Jeigu norétumėte gauti šią informaciją savo kalba,  
skambinkite telefonu 01228 606060

W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę  
zatelefonować pod numer 01228 606060

Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua,  
telefone para o 01228 606060

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde görmek istiyorsanız lütfen  
01228 606060 numaralı telefonu arayınız



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