

Cumbria Adoption

Cumbria Adoption

Writing your Letterbox Letter

Guidance for birth families



0303 333 1216



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Working for **Cumberland Council** and
Westmorland & Furness Council

cumbriaadoption.org.uk

What is Letterbox?

Letterbox is the arrangement that helps birth families and adoptive parents keep in touch and exchange information.

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

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, 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, details on how to get in touch with us are at the end of this leaflet.

What helps

Creating a life story - 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.

A common interest - 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.

Reassurance - The letters help your child to know that their birth family members are OK, and will help them to settle and be happy with their new family. They also let you know that the child is safe and well. It really helps children to know that the exchange of letters will happen at a regular time - for example - once a year in June.

Vital information - 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.

Everyday life - 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.

Avoid some details - 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 think may not be OK.

Send your love - 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

Finding the words - 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 Team for help to write, or just for general advice about what you want to write. Their details are at the end of this leaflet.

Trying to explain - 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 about maintaining a link which can help your child feel settled and happy.

First name terms - 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 and Dad, and it is important that they are not confused by the letters, or that they make them feel uncomfortable or unsettled in their new life.



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

cumbriaadoption.org.uk

British Agency for Adoption and
Fostering - Advice page
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

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে 03033 331216 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

如果您希望通过母语了解此信息，请致电 03033 331216

Jeigu norėtumėte gauti šią informaciją savo kalba, skambinkite telefonu 03033 331216

W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwu języku proszę zatelefonować pod numer 03033 331216

Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua, telefone para o 03033 331216

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde görmek istiyorsanız lütfen 03033 331216 numaralı telefonu arayınız

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