



Writing your letterbox letter guidance for adopters

Congratulations

You have been approved as adopters for Cumbria County Council's Children's Services. When you are matched with a child you will be asked to participate in letterbox contact. This leaflet explains why letterbox contact is a good idea and gives some helpful hints for your letters.

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.

With all of this in mind, we have prepared the following Do's and Don'ts. If it would be helpful, we can 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.



Do

- Consider how important contact can be in maintaining a positive link for your child with his/her past. Information can be shared, both ways, which can be an investment in your child's future well being.
- 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.





Do

- 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 Letterbox Coordinator and ask that they pass the message on.
- Share news about the children, including their achievements, and some of the things they have been doing over the year. Birth families will be interested in school achievements, interests and hobbies, pets, friends and the things the children enjoy doing.
- Ask for support if you receive difficult information. If a letter contains news about the birth of further siblings 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 s/he grows up so there are no great surprises in the future in a letter from birth family.

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 cause a delay, or will have to cut out the information which will make the letter look strange.
- 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.
- Let us know if difficult things happen in your own family which will affect the letterbox 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 pass on the message to birth family which helps them stop worrying about why the letters have stopped coming.



Don't

- Sign an agreement that 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.
- Avoid answering letters from the Letterbox Coordinator. If you don't feel the letterbox arrangements are working we'll discuss your reasons with the letterbox 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 letterbox arrangements are meeting your child's needs.



Example letter from adopters to birth family

Tip – remember not to include your address

Dear (first name(s) of birth relative)

Thank you for your last letter. Thomas does ask a lot of questions about his past and he really enjoys hearing about you.

Thomas is now 8 years old and in year 3 at school. He enjoys school and is very popular. He has really shot up this last year and has made good progress in all his subjects. He is particularly good at English and enjoys writing short stories. He is part of the school football team and has started to play for a community team on Sundays. He also enjoys playing guitar and has recently passed his first music exam.

We recently went on holiday to Spain. There was a huge pool at the resort and Thomas practised his swimming strokes. He is quite a strong swimmer and recently got a swimming certificate. He made several friends on holiday and we are hoping to return next year.

Thomas has said that he wanted to send you something this year, so I have enclosed a picture that he has drawn for you.

Best wishes,

Peter and Stella

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

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

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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