

## What happens if either party doesn't respond?

Most agreements are not legally binding and not linked to any Court order. It is usually a voluntary agreement and is dependent on the goodwill of those participating. Reminder letters are sent out and if participants still don't respond further letters are sent out inviting participants to get in touch and discuss any concerns with the aim of encouraging ongoing exchanges.

Sometimes participants change address and forget to let us know so occasionally there may be a delay in receiving responses. It is expected that any changes to the original agreements will be discussed and agreed with all participants.

## How long does the letterbox last?

The letterbox arrangement usually ends when the child is 18 when they can make their own decisions about how or if they wish to continue with the contact.

## Where can I get support or advice?

Adoption Support Team  
Lincolnshire Children's Services  
Orchard House  
Orchard Street  
Lincoln LN1 1BA

Tel: 01522 554056

Email: [adoptionsthelpline@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:adoptionsthelpline@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

## Alternative formats

If you would like to request a copy of our **Letterbox service** leaflet in an alternative language please call **01522 782060**

### Polish

Ta informacja jest także dostępna w innym języku i formacie. W razie jakichkolwiek pytań zadzwoń pod powyższy numer.

### Russian

Эта информация может быть предоставлена на другом языке или в другом формате. По всем вопросам пожалуйста звоните по вышеуказанному номеру.

### Portuguese

Esta informação pode ser fornecida em outro idioma ou formato. Para quaisquer inquéritos, contacte o número acima.

### Latvian

Ja nepieciešams, šo informāciju varat saņemt citā valodā vai citā formātā. Uzziņām, lūdzu zvaniem pa augstāk norādīto tālruni.

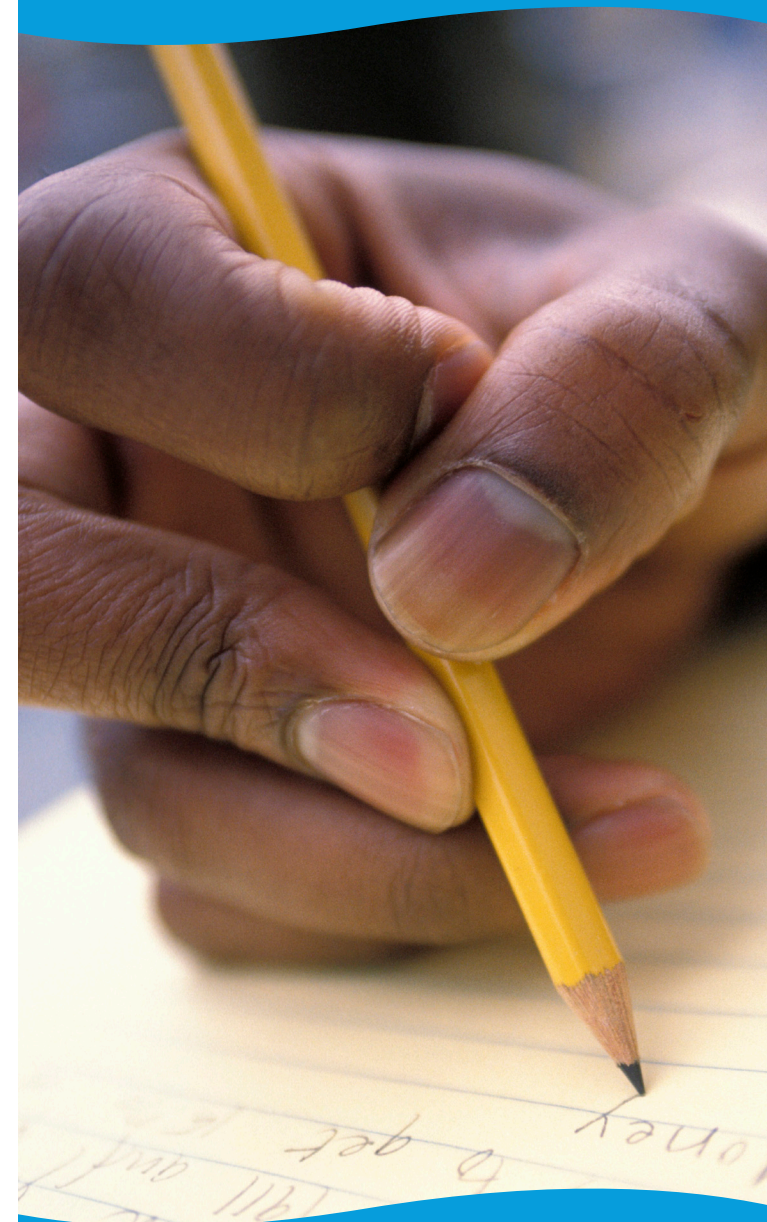
### Lithuanian

Ši informacija gali būti pateikta kitoje kalboje ar formate. Visiem pasiteiravimam prašome susisiekti su viršuj nurodytu numeriu.

### Slovak

Táto informácia môže byť poskytnutá v inom jazyku alebo formáte. So všetkými otázkami sa prosím obráťte na vyššie uvedené číslo.

## Letterbox service



Enabling the exchange of information after adoption



## General information on letterbox

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This is a service run by Lincolnshire County Council Adoption Support Team which enables birth relatives and adoptive parents to exchange information after adoption.

The main purpose of Letterbox is to exchange written information and possibly photographs to assist the adopted child throughout their childhood and to let birth family know how they are getting on.

## Why?

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Adopted people who know little or nothing about their original backgrounds can sometimes feel they do not really know who they are.

“Lessons have been learned from counselling adopted adults who have found that past secrecy has left them with unresolved questions about their family history, culture and identity. The importance of information about origins is now widely accepted in adoption practice.”

*Triseliotis et al, 1997*

## Adopted children

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The aim of the Letterbox is to help children feel accepted into their adoptive family and at the same time feel comfortable in acknowledging their origins and having reassurance that their birth family is all right. Sometimes they can feel upset by hearing much later in life that they have brothers and sisters born to their birth parents.

## Birth relatives

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For birth relatives feeling that their child is well, happy and obviously loved is reassuring and helps them to see that they can still contribute in a positive way to their child's future. They can often feel unresolved anguish and concern if they don't receive any news.

## Adopters

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Nowadays many adoptive parents see that a continuing link with birth relatives is an important part of their children's upbringing. Letterbox enables them to answer their children's questions about their past and to share changes affecting their birth families' lives.

## How is letterbox set up?

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When the plan is agreed for a child to be adopted, there are decisions made about what future contact with the birth family is best for the child. If indirect contact through Letterbox is agreed, agreement forms are completed by the adopters and birth relatives. Birth relatives and adopters are given help deciding when the Letterbox exchanges should take place and what can be included in the exchange by the social workers involved.

## When can it start?

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The Letterbox agreement is set up as soon as possible after a child's placement with adopters and comes into effect once the adoption has been granted. There is usually an exchange prior to the adoption so any teething problems can be sorted out while social workers are still involved.

## How does it work?

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In most cases a Letterbox exchange will take place once or sometimes twice per year. All letters passing either way will be read by the Letterbox co-ordinator and copies kept on file. If the co-ordinator feels you have written something inappropriate they will contact you to discuss their concerns and agree a way forward.

The exchange is usually adult to adult – between the adopters and the birth relatives – although as children get older it is often in their best interest to be included too. Letterbox support can be offered to encourage this arrangement.

## What happens to post that cannot be sent on?

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Any letters that could not be passed on will be kept on the letterbox file and are then put with the adoption file when the child turns 18. After that time the adopted young person can access their adoption file with the support of an adoption social worker.