**ADOPTION TRANSITION PACK**

**ADOPTION TRANSITIONS PLANNING MEETING**

Attendees:

* Chair – Independent Reviewing Officer for child
* Child’s Social Worker
* Child’s Social Worker Line Manager (if SW less than 3 years qualified)
* Adopters
* Adoption Assessing Social Worker (Adoption Link Worker)
* Foster Carers
* Fostering Support Social Worker

Paperwork Required and Actions Prior to Meeting

* **When booking matching panel -** child’s social worker has contacted IRO for a potential date for meeting and adoption panel admin sends a copy of papers to IRO.
* **After Matching Panel** – Agency Decision Maker (ADM) will usually take up to 10 working days to ratify Adoption Panel recommendation.
* **Child’s Social Worker** to set Transition Planning meeting for after this date – usually 12th working day after panel, and before 15th working day after panel. As IRO is chairing, obviously this date needs confirming with them first.
* **Adoption Family Finder** will have already been drawing up Transition/Introduction Plan, having checked everyone’s availability: (after matching panel) have close discussion with Foster Carer and Adopters to prepare version. Plan to have been as fully completed as possible with child’s details, attendees and contact details and proposed plan by the Family Finder prior to meeting and copies used in meeting, then amended, if needed.
* **Transition Plan** to include notes on which professionals are around during the period of the plan, and a draft plan to be circulated to all concerned prior to meeting. Any outstanding issues can be discussed at the meeting itself and the final plan made/distributed urgently by social worker.
* **Adoption Link Worker** to ensure that Adopters have had sight and understanding of the Parental Responsibility Form and the Agree to Placement form, which will be agreed and signed at the meeting. Child’s social worker brings all the actual paperwork to the meeting
* **Later Life Letter** guidance to be given to Child’s Social Worker, as the Later Life Letter will need completing by time of Adoption Order at the latest.

**AGENDA**

1. Introductions and Welcome from Chair
2. Any new developments since Matching Panel?
3. Is all the information currently correct? Chair to record if the adopters feel they have full information and are ready to proceed.
4. Looking at **Transition Plan** and discussing any changes required. Changes noted and email with updated arrangements sent out by social worker within 24 hours.
5. **Parental Responsibility Form** to be discussed and signed
6. **Proposed Placement date –** Chair needs to be clear that this is just a proposal and that, should the child need it, could be subject to change. Dates of the CIC visits and reviews of progress to be completed in table provided at end of Transition Plan, both for T.M. Midway review date and of 1st review of placement by IRO.
7. **Letterbox Contact Contracts** to be discussed and signed by adopters, then Social Worker to ensure that birth relatives have their section completed and signed – Chair to set date by which this should be done.
8. **Later Life Letter** – Chair to give a reminder to Child Care Social Worker that this is a responsibility and to ensure they have the guidance needed – and, if possible, to set a date by which time this needs to be completed.

TRANSITION PLAN

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CHILD’S NAME:** |  | **DOB:** |  |
| **CARE FIRST NO:** |  | **DATE PLAN WRITTEN:** |  |

Key Personnel and contact details:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ROLE** | **NAME** | **AGENCY** | **MOBILE** | **LANDLINE** | **ATTEND**  **MEETING** |
| **Child’s SW** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Child’s SW Manager** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Adopter** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Adopter** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Adoption SW** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Adoption Family Finder** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Adoption Manager** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Foster Carer** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Foster Carer** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Fostering Link Worker** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **IRO** |  |  |  |  |  |

**Introductions Chart (to be extended as required), to allow a child and adopted family to ‘nest’ and settle.**

**A minimum period of 1 week may be suitable for Foster to Adopt cases, for example. In most cases, however, the introductions need to be longer. Recent BAAF evidence dictates that introductions should be longer as this leads to better outcomes for the child and adoptive family in the long term. Improving transitions helps the child feel safe and secure, enabling them to begin to build new attachments to their new family. Our experience shows that improved transitions also help to reduce disruptions in the long term. If a reduction to an introduction plan is being considered, IRO agreement and Operations Manager approval is required.**

**It is important when planning around education and a school move that children and adopters are given the opportunity to form bonds by not rushing into school too early.  This is a recognised need and should be recorded as an ‘authorised absence’ in adoption cases. When starting school, the child will need a planned gradual introduction to school.  ALL OF THESE DECISIONS SHOULD BE AT THE CHILD’S PACE.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **DATE AND TIME** | **ACTIVITIES AND LOCATION** | **SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS OR COMMENTS – who is available for support if needed** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  | Review of Introductions | Review of Introductions Form to be used and put on system for IRO to see prior to First CIC review |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  | Placement Date | Child’s SW to be available for official handover. |

**NOTIFICATION TO BE MADE WHEN PLACED**

1. Child’s Social Worker to ensure that notifications are as follows, by completing (form memo 3) which will be sent after matching panel regarding placement.

* Written notification of placement , with report of child’s health history and current state of health, to adopters’ GP
* Written notification of placement to Local Authority, if not agency responsible for plan
* Written notification to Primary Care Trust (England) or Local Health Board (Wales) for the area where prospective adopter has their home. Similar arrangements for N. Ireland and Scotland.
* Where child is of compulsory school age, written notification to Local Education Authority where prospective adopters have their home, of placement and information about child’s educational history and whether assessed as having special education needs as outlined by Education Act 1996

1. Adopters to ensure that child is registered with their GP and, where appropriate, school.
2. Child’s social worker to ensure formal letters are sent to the birth parents to say child has been placed.

Adopters need to have read the Agree to Placement Document and Parental Responsibility Form and be clear on the following:

* Upon placement, the child is still legally in Care to the Local Authority, but now placed under the Adoption Regs. under the Placement Order.
* The child remains a ‘looked after child’ until the Adoption Order is granted
* As such, the Local Authority retains a duty to ensure safety and welfare of child
* Adopters must agree to regular statutory visits by Social Workers
* Adopters must attend statutory Child In Care review of placements, as outlined below
* Adopters must agree to child being seen on their own and for their bedroom to be seen by the visiting Social Worker
* A review of child’s Personal Education Plan will be held at the school within 20 working days of placement change and adopters to attend.

**Statutory Visit/Review Plan**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Type of Visit/Review** | **Who Undertaking** |
|  | Start of Transition Plan | See Plan |
|  | Midway Review |  |
|  | First Social Work Visit – week 1  (Following placement) |  |
|  | Second Social Work Visit – week 2 |  |
|  | Third Social Work Visit – week 3 |  |
|  | Fourth Social Work visit – week 4 |  |
|  | First CiC Review |  |

* At the First CiC Review, IRO will ensure visiting level is reviewed and set at level needed by child and placement.

**Lifestory Book and Later Life Letter**

Official timescales are that Lifestory Book needs to be with Adopters for use at time of Adoption Order. In Devon we work hard to have a small Lifestory book available at point of placement, or by first review, and the full Lifestory Book to be available by time of Adoption Order. This work is undertaken by specialist workers within the Adoption Team.

Later Life Letter needs to be with adopters by Adoption Order at the latest. It is the responsibility of the current Child Care Social Worker to pull together all the information from the files to give a detailed, factual account of the child’s story, aimed at an older teenager. Guidance available.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Person Responsible** | **Name of Worker** | **Date Due by** |
| **Little All about Me book** | Lifestory Worker – Adoption Team |  |  |
| **Full Lifestory Book** | Lifestory Worker – Adoption Team |  | By Adoption Order |
| **Later Life Letter** | Child’s Social Worker, Child Care Team |  |  |

**Letter Box Contact Contract**

It is important that this contract is signed by all parties as soon as possible to enable the Letterbox co-ordinator to set up on the system so that timescales are kept to and not missed.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **YES** | **NO** | **Date to be completed by** | **Who responsible to ensure this happens** |
| Have adopters completed and signed the contract? |  |  |  |  |
| Have birth relatives completed and signed the contract? |  |  |  |  |
| Are adopters happy to send a settling in letter (if appropriate)? |  |  |  |  |

Any other comments regarding post adoption contact plan:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Any other issues discussed in meeting:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

Signed: IRO ………………………………………………………………………………….Date……………………………

****

**ADOPTION AND CHILDREN ACT 2002 – SECTION 25 - DELEGATION OF PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**IN RESPECT OF CHILD PLACED FOR ADOPTION**

**Name of Child DoB\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Issues Considered** | **Delegated to adopters** | Retained by local authority | Retained by birth parents |
| **Health** |  |  |  |
| Consent for urgent medical treatment; |  |  |  |
| Consent to planned operations which require anaesthetic; |  |  |  |
| Consent for routine health & developmental checks; |  |  |  |
| Consent for immunisations |  |  |  |
| Decisions in relation to involvement in counselling or therapeutic services |  |  |  |
| Decisions in relation to dental treatment |  |  |  |
| **Education & Day Care** |  |  |  |
| Choice and timing of child attending any type of pre-school/nursery provision |  |  |  |
| **Care** |  |  |  |
| Liaison with local education authority regarding choice and timing of start of new school |  |  |  |
| Appeal in respect of the allocation of a school place |  |  |  |
| Appeal or advocacy for the child in relation to any special education provision |  |  |  |
| Liaison with school/attendance at parents evening, and receipt of school reports |  |  |  |
| Agreement to child taking part in any out of school activities i.e. educational trips or holidays with the school |  |  |  |
| **Religion** |  |  |  |
| Involvement of child in regular religious activities. |  |  |  |
| Baptism or confirmation of child in particular faith |  |  |  |
| **Holidays & Social** |  |  |  |
| Application for passport |  |  |  |
| Agreement to take child out of the country |  |  |  |
| Agreement to take the child away from the family home for longer than a weekend for holidays/visits to relatives etc |  |  |  |
| Agreement to child taking part in any adventure activities which require parental consent. |  |  |  |
| Decision to cause the child to be known as anything other than their given name (N.B. see notes below - consent required from birth parents or leave of court) |  |  |  |
| Decision to leave child in care of another responsible adult on a regular basis  e.g whilst adoptive parent is working |  |  |  |
| **Contact** |  |  |  |
| Decisions in respect of contact arrangements with birth family over and above those already agreed as part of adoption placement plan |  |  |  |
| Decisions in respect of contact arrangements with previous foster carers |  |  |  |
| **Other Issues** |  |  |  |

Signed ……………………………………………………Dated ……………………………..

Independent Reviewing Officer (Chair)

Signed ……………………………………………………Dated ……………………………..

Prospective Adopter

Signed ……………………………………………………Dated ……………………………..

Prospective Adopter

Signed ……………………………………………………Dated ……………………………..

Child’s Social Worker,

Signed ……………………………………………………Dated ……………………………..

Adopters Social Worker,

**Note**

Changing the name a child is known by.  When a child is placed for adoption, and regardless of whether the placement has been authorised by consent or by a placement order, **no-one may cause the child to be known by a new surname unless the court has given permission, or each parent or guardian of the child has given written consent.  (Section 28, Adoption & Children Act).  An application to the court for permission to change the child’s name can be made by the prospective adopter or by the local authority or agency which placed the child.**  Where it is particularly important to allow the child to be known by a new name – for instance to safeguard against the possibility of the child being traced – then the local authority may make an application and it can do so before the child is actually placed for adoption.

 **Agree to Placement**

From

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of Prospective Adopters** | **Address of Prospective Adopters** |
|  |  |

Regarding

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Child/ren** | **D.O.B** | **Legal Status** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Child’s Social Worker** | **Contact Address** | **Telephone Number** |
|  |  |  |

We understand that the above named child/ren are to be placed with us under the Adoption Agencies Regularions 2005. In accepting this placement we agree to the following:

* 1. To ensure the child is kept safe and cared for appropriately
  2. To receive advice and support as necessary from the Adoption Agency and it’s representatives pending the granting of an Adoption Order
  3. To adhere to the agreed Adoption Transitions Plan
  4. To ensure that the Adoption Agency is kept informed of any changes

We confirm that we have received both verbal and written information from the child’s Social Worker including the Child’s Permanence Report, Adoption Transitions Plan any agreed Contact Arrangements and Adoption Support Plan.

We agree that we will:

1. Facilitate arrangements for visits by Social Workers and where appropriate Child’s Guardian
2. Participate in Statutory Reviews (the first review is within 4 weeks, and the next approx. 3 months later and then held 6 monthly up until an Adoption Order is granted.)
3. Undertake Adoption Contact arrangements as agreed

We are happy to proceed with the placement and agree that if the Adoption Agency takes the decision tthat the child should not remain with us, we will return the child to the agency within 7(seven) days of notice having been given to us by the agency.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Prospective Adopters (print)** | **Signature** | **Date** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**REVIEW OF ADOPTION INTRODUCTIONS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date of Review** |  |
| **Date Introductions Started** |  |
| **Chair of Review** |  |
| **Venue** |  |
| **Name of Child/ren** |  |
| **Name of Adopters** |  |
| **Attendees at Review and their role:** |  |
| **What has gone well so far?**  **Check separately with Adopters**  **Foster Carers**  **Social workers**  **Child if appropriate and any children in adoptive family if appropriate** |  |
| **What difficulties have there been and have they been resolved?**  **Check separately with Adopters**  **Foster Carers**  **Social workers**  **Child if appropriate and any children in adoptive family if appropriate** |  |
| **Have practical arrangements worked – if not what has to be sorted?** |  |
| **Have you modified the original plan in any way – if so how?** |  |
| **Are any modifications needed to the remainder of the plan?** |  |
| **Any change to ideas on proposed post Adoption Support?** |  |
| **Is it agreed by everyone that the introductions are to proceed to placement?**  **Please record any dissenting views** |  |
| **Proposed date of placement** |  |
| **Is a further review needed before placement – either meeting or telephone review?** |  |
| **Signed by Chair of Review and dated.** |  |

Ensure this document is then put onto System (Trim) for IRO to see prior to first review

**Suggested format for Child’s Social Worker Later Life Letters**

Later life letters are given to the adopters at the time of the adoption. The aim is to help the young person answer some of the many questions they have about their circumstances, and to build on the information they’ve had from their life story book.

They are held by the adopters until they see it as appropriate to share it with the young person.

This is likely to be a young person of 16+, so the letter should be pitched at this age group.

* For examples of later life letters please contact the Adoption Team.

Why we do them?

Many adopted children will grow up feeling that their family couldn’t look after them as they weren’t lovable enough. That if they were more lovable then their birth mother would have given up drugs, got out of violent relationships etc.

We have learned form adult adoption counselling that there are key issues that adoptees want to know about their birth mother, even if they were 45 and relinquished at birth:

* Did she want me?
* Did she love me,
* Why couldn’t I grow up with them?
* Does she ever think of me now.
* What help were my birth family given to change their ways, and be able to care for me?

We can’t answer all these questions, all of the time, but when we can, we should.

Adopters will have had a life story book for their child, which will give them words and pictures to start to talk to their child about the above issues, but as they get older adopted young people will start to seek a more sophisticated understanding of their circumstances

Adopters can use the later life letter to help them think about how they talk to their child about this, and then when they consider the time is right, they can give the letter to their child.

We will store a copy of it on our system so that if adopters loose it, they can get another copy through us, or a young person can get it directly from us after they are 18.

The Dof E Statutory Guidance states:

*Later life letter: AAR 35*

*51. A social worker who knows the child, preferably the child’s social worker, should prepare the later life letter for the child. The letter should explain the child’s history from birth and be sufficiently detailed so that in the future the adolescent child, or young adult, will have factual details about their birth family and their life before adoption, and so be able to understand why they could not live with their birth family, and why they were adopted. The letter should be given to the prospective adopter within ten working days of the adoption ceremony, i.e. the ceremony to celebrate the making of the adoption order.*

*(*However it is good practice to give adopters the letter by the time of the child’s first review in placement. Social workers move on, and sometimes even forget!)

*52. The child’s birth family could be asked by the agency to write either their own letters to the child or contributions to the agency’s letter, should the agency consider either of these steps appropriate.*

*(We have separate guidance for this, please request from adoption team if you think it’s appropriate for this child.)*

A later life letter should:

* Offers a personal and in depth account from the perspective of the social worker
* Should honestly and accurately reflect the child’s history
* And the parent’s circumstances
* Include positive personal comments about the child and their family
* Needs to be free of social work jargon
* Introduce yourself in the letter
* When you first met
* How long you knew the family
* Explain the birth relatives situation at the time you became involved,
* Including where the children were living
* Include as much as possible about the background of the family
* A description of social services involvement, including the particular events that lead to the child coming into care.
* Give CLEAR EXAMPLES
* Chronological events and court outcomes.
* Information about previous carers and their families
* Warm anecdotal memories of the child mean a lot
* Tell them what makes them special
* Challenges you know they overcame.
* Tell them what you enjoyed doing with them
* Recall any special times.
* End by conveying your best wishes to the child for their future commenting at your pleasure, in being involved in the child’s life.

**Updated October 2014**

Jennie Stephens

Strategic Director, People

FREEPOST RTGH-TRCR-EHXB

Letterbox Service

Devon County Council

Follaton House

Plymouth Road

TOTNES

TQ9 5RS

Tel: 01392 383000



# ADOPTION CONTACT AGREEMENT FOR ADOPTERS

## FOR ADOPTERS

The information contained in this agreement is strictly confidential and in order to preserve this confidentiality, all parties to the agreement accept that contact material will be opened by the Letterbox Service to ensure that it is forwarded to the correct destination and without any identifying details. Please note that any addresses will always be deleted from all correspondence.

Access to this agreement is protected by the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983.

### TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SOCIAL WORKER WITH THE ADOPTERS:

An agreement has been made in respect of:

**THE CHILD (birth name**) …………………………………………………………………………………..

**DATE OF BIRTH** …………………………………………………………………………………………..

That contact between the child, via the prospective adopters/adoptive parents, through the Devon County Council’s Letterbox Service at the Social Services Department, should be maintained with:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Contact with** | **Name** | **Tick if applic** |
| 1. Birth Mother |  |  |
| 1. Birth Father |  |  |
| 1. Maternal Grandmother |  |  |
| 1. Maternal Grandfather |  |  |
| 1. Paternal Grandmother |  |  |
| 1. Paternal Grandfather |  |  |
| 1. Siblings |  |  |
| 1. Previous Carers |  |  |
| 1. Any Others |  |  |

**Please note that where contact has been agreed with birth relatives who are currently partners, if that partnership is dissolved then an assumption will be made that correspondence will continue to be forwarded to them as separate individuals, unless instructed otherwise on this form.**

**CONTACT IS TO BE MAINTAINED WITH:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of Contact person** | **Relationship to child** | **Indirect**  **1 x way** | **Indirect**  **2 x way** | **1 x year or 2 x year** | **Specific month/s** | **Photos ?**  **Cards?**  **Newsletter?** |
| ***e.g Mary Smith*** | ***Maternal GM*** |  | ***Yes*** | ***1*** | ***March*** | ***Newsletter only*** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Is there a direct contact plan, if so what are details:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Any other specific requests e.g. who would write first:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Declaration and Agreement of Prospective Adopters / Adoptive Parents**

**I/We** ………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

have been actively involved in reaching this Contract Agreement in respect of:

**(Child’s birth name)** ………………………………………………………………………………………...

I/We undertake to keep the Devon County Council Letterbox Service, informed of my/our address in order that I/we can give/receive information as agreed.

I/We understand that the exchange of information whilst adult to adult, is on behalf of the child/children, who will have access to all newsletters from the age of 18, if they wish.

I/We undertake to comply with the Agreement.

Signature ……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Date …………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Signature ……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date ………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

Address ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………Post Code …………………. …...

Tel : ……………………………………. Email : …………………………………………………………..

A copy of this Agreement Form is to be sent to the Letterbox Service, a copy kept on file

and a copy to be retained by the Prospective Adopters/Adoptive Parents.

**Updated October 2014**

Jennie Stephens

Strategic Director, People

FREEPOST RTGH-TRCR-EHXB

Letterbox Service

Devon County Council

Follaton House

Plymouth Road

TOTNES

TQ9 5RS

Tel: 01392 383000



# ADOPTION CONTACT AGREEMENT

## FOR BIRTH RELATIVES

The information contained in this agreement is strictly confidential and in order to preserve this confidentiality, all parties to the agreement accept that contact material will be opened by the Letterbox Service to ensure that it is forwarded to the correct destination and without any identifying details.

Please note that any addresses will always be deleted from all correspondence.

Access to this agreement is protected by the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983.

### TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SOCIAL WORKER WITH THE RELEVANT BIRTH FAMILY MEMBER OR SIGNIFICANT PERSON

PLEASE REMEMBER - THE EXCHANGES ARE “ADULT TO ADULT”

An agreement has been made in respect of:

THE CHILD (birth name) …………………………………………………………………………………..

DATE OF BIRTH …………………………………………………………………………………………..

That contact between the prospective adopters/adoptive parents, through the Devon County Council’s Letterbox System at Children and Young People’s Services, should be maintained with:

#### FULL NAME OF PARTY TO AGREEMENT

**……………………………………………………………………………………………………………….**

#### RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHILD

**………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Indirect***  ***1 x year*** | **Indirect**  **2 x year** | **What Months** | **You can send**  **Newsletter?**  **Photos?**  **Cards?**  **Vouchers?** | **Adopters will send**  **Newsletter?**  **Photos ?**  **Cards?** | **Any Direct contact agreed, if so what month?** |
| *e.g..* | *YES* | *Feb and Oct* | *Newletter,*  *Cards, Vouchers* | *Newsletter*  *Photo* | *None* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Confidentiality Statement**

In recent years the development of the internet has opened up and changed the way people communicate with each other. We feel that there is a need to offer clear guidance to birth relatives of adopted children on the use of the internet for sharing information of their adopted children.

In nearly all cases Letterbox Contact is a voluntary commitment on the part of adoptive parents at the time the children are adopted.

Unfortunately in a few cases, birth relatives have used the internet to try to find their adopted children. Such actions cannot be in the best interests of your child/children and any information about your birth child that has been posted on the internet, should be removed as quickly as possible. For further information on this look at the BAAF website [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk) or contact the adoption team.

Please consider very carefully which family members you share information with. The information provided by the adopters is confidential to the person it is addressed to.

.

Letterbox contact remains the best and safest way for birth relatives to keep in touch and exchange news with an adoptive family until a child is old enough to make their own decisions about contact. Attempts to contact a child prematurely through Facebook or other websites may well result in adoptive parents withdrawing completely from any form of contact.

### Declaration and Agreement

I undertake to keep the Adoption Agency’s Letterbox Service, informed of my address in order that I can receive/give information as agreed.

I understand that the Letterbox service cannot exchange presents, money, or videos.

I understand that the Letterbox Service may make minor amendments to obscure identifying information, without consulting me. I will be consulted about any substantial alteration to what I have written.

I understand this will be a commitment to my child until he/she is 18 years of age and I undertake to comply fully with this agreement.

I have understood the content of the Letterbox Confidentiality Statement and agree that all correspondence/photographs I receive will be:

KEPT PRIVATE

KEPT SAFE

KEPT OFF THE INTERNET

Signature ……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Date …………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Address ……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………… Post Code …………………..

Tel : ………………………………………. Email : ………………………………………………………

## A copy of this Agreement Form is to be sent to the Letterbox Service, a copy kept on file

**and a copy sent to the Birth Relative**

**UPDATED October 2014**

Jennie Stephens

Strategic Director, People

FREEPOST RTGH-TRCR-EHXB

LETTERBOX SERVICE

Follaton House, Plymouth Road

TOTNES, TQ9 5RS

Tel: 01392 383000

Fax: 01392 386609



# POST ADOPTION CONTACT

# LETTERBOX - DIRECT

**CORE INFORMATION FORM**

The information contained in this agreement is strictly confidential and in order to preserve this confidentiality, all parties to the agreement accept that contact material will be opened by the Letterbox Service to ensure that it is forwarded to the correct destination and without any identifying details.

All contents will be photocopied and kept on file. Please note that any addresses will always be deleted from all correspondence.

Access to this agreement is protected by the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983.

### TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CHILD’S SOCIAL WORKER AND RETURNED TO

### THE LETTERBOX SERVICE

An agreement has been made in respect of:

THE CHILD (birth name) ………………………………………………………………………………..

DATE OF BIRTH ………………………………………………………………………………………..

That contact between the child, via the prospective adopters/adoptive parents, through the Devon County Council’s Letterbox Service, should be maintained with the persons detailed in this agreement.

***PLEASE REMEMBER –***

***LETTERBOX EXCHANGES ARE “ADULT TO ADULT”***

**DETAILS OF CHILD**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Child’s birth name |  |
| Child’s adopted name |  |
| If adoptive first name different from birth name please state which name should be used in correspondence to birth relatives. |  |
| Date of birth |  |
| Either Date placed for adoption |  |
| Or Date of Adoption Order |  |
| Child’s Care Manager |  |

**DETAILS OF THE ADOPTIVE PARENT(S)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of adoptive parent |  |
| **Address of adopter(s)** |  |
| **Telephone number:**  **e-mail address:** |  |
| **Adoptive Parents’ social worker**  **(and address and tel. no. if non-DCC)** |  |
| **Are there any other children in the adoptive home other than the child in question?** | **Yes No** |
| **If yes, please give name(s)**  **Date(s) of birth and if birth or adopted** |  |

**PLEASE ENTER DETAILS OF LETTERBOX CONTACT**

**From ADOPTERS to Birth Relatives**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **BIRTH RELATIVES PARTICIPATING IN LETTERBOX** | **WHAT THE ADOPTERS ARE SENDING:**  **1 Letters**  **2 Photographs**  **3 Birthday/Christmas cards**  Please circle relevant numbers | | **Is there any agreement for Direct Contact to take place?** |
| **Birth Mother**  Name:  Address:  Tel. No. | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3  1 2 3  1 2 3 | Yes/No  Month: |
| **Birth Father**  Name:  Address:  Tel. No. | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3  1 2 3  1 2 3 | Yes/No  Month: |
| **Maternal Grandparent(s)**  Name:  Address:  Tel. No. | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3  1 2 3  1 2 3 | Yes/No  Month |
| **Paternal Grandparent(s)**  Name:  Address:  Tel. No. | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3  1 2 3  1 2 3 | Yes/No  Month |
| **Other significant person**  Name:  Address:  Tel. No. | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3  1 2 3  1 2 3 | Yes/No  Month |
| Siblings  Please complete page 5 |  |  |  |

**PLEASE COMPLETE ONLY FOR BIRTH RELATIVES ACTIVELY TAKING PART IN THIS AGREEMENT. FROM BIRTH RELATIVE TO ADOPTER.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **BIRTH RELATIVE** | **What the Birth relative is sending**    **1 Letters**  **2 Photographs**  **3 Birthday/Christmas cards (indicate**  **which)**  **4 Vouchers**  **Please circle corresponding number below**. | |  |
| **BIRTH MOTHER** | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3 4    1 2 3 4  1 2 3 4  Please state value of  Vouchers agreed: £ | Did birth mother meet prospective adopters: Yes/No |
| **BIRTH FATHER:** | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3 4    1 2 3 4  1 2 3 4  Please state value of  Vouchers agreed: £ | Did birth father meet prospective  Adopters: Yes/No |
| **MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS** | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3 4    1 2 3 4  1 2 3 4  Please state value of  Vouchers agreed: £ | If cards are part of agreement, how should grandparents sign them e.g. Janet and John, Granpa and Grandma Smith etc. |
| **PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS** | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3 4    1 2 3 4  1 2 3 4  Please state value of  Vouchers agreed: £ | Cards to be signed: |
| **Other significant person** | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3 4    1 2 3 4  1 2 3 4  Please state value of  Vouchers agreed: £ | Cards to be signed: |

**LETTERBOX CONTACT WITH SIBLINGS**

DETAILS OF BIRTH SIBLINGS/HALF SIBLINGS WHERE INDIRECT CONTACT NEEDS TO BE MANAGED BY LETTERBOX SERVICE. (If possible adopters of siblings in separate placements should exchange between themselves).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **BIRTH NAME OF SIBLING:** |  | |
| **DATE OF BIRTH:** |  | |
| **IF ADOPTED, PLEASE GIVE**  **ADOPTIVE NAME:** |  | |
| **THE CHILDREN SHARE:** | Birth mother\birth father\both (please underline which applicable) | |
| **WHO DO THEY LIVE WITH:** | Relative\Adopter\Foster Carer\Residential Care\lives independently  *(Please underline which applicable and give name)* | |
| **ADDRESS:** | If NOT living independently, has the responsible adult been consulted and agreed to:   1. Write a newsletter on the child’s behalf   or   1. Advise/support/supervise the child to write their own letter   *Please underline which applicable.* | |
| **What is being sent FROM adopted child.** | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3 4    1 2 3 4  1 2 3 4 |
| **What is being sent TO**  **Adopted child.** | Month:  Month:  Month: | 1 2 3 4    1 2 3 4  1 2 3 4  Vouchers agreed: £ |
| **PLEASE GIVEN BRIEF DETAILS OF ANY DIRECT CONTACT** | MONTH: | ALLOCATED ADOPTION CCW: |

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**The following information is required to facilitate the effective management of the proposed exchanges.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Did birth mother/father contest the adoption?** |  |
| **Brief reasons for the child being adopted.** |  |
| **IS THERE A COURT ORDER**  **FOR DIRECT/INDIRECT**  **CONTACT. If so, which Section is it made under/ what does it specify?** |  |
| **Are any parties to this agreement listed as “Risk to Children”?** |  |
| **If birth parents are receiving news and living together has agreement been reached that both will continue to receive news if they separate?** |  |
| **Does either of the birth parents have a learning disability or mental health issues?** |  |
| **Would they require help with letter writing?** |  |

**DETAILS OF PERSON COMPLETING THESE FORMS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** |  |
| **Office address with email** |  |
| **Telephone number** |  |
| **Signature** | **Date:** |

# UPDATED Oct 2014

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# GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STAFF

# ADOPTION LETTERBOX SCHEME

The Letterbox Service facilitates and supports the ongoing exchange of information between birth and adoptive families after adoption. **The child’s best interests are always at the heart of decision-making about** **Letterbox agreements**. Letterbox contact is driven by the recognition that a child’s knowledge of his/her background is crucial to the formation of positive self-identity.

Up to date information of the birth family provided by the adopters to the child helps children and young people to maintain a realistic picture of their original family. Alongside this is recognition of birth parents need for information.

Research findings indicate that most adoptions are strengthened, not undermined by indirect contact with the birth family. However, every situation is different and must be treated individually. The appropriateness of any form of contact will depend upon various factors, most importantly the wishes, feelings and welfare of the child. The success of the exchange of information is dependent upon:

1. The willingness of both birth and adoptive families to participate

2. The ability of those with whom the child is to have contact to

recognise the importance of supporting the adoptive placement and

to respond to the child’s needs.

The Letterbox Scheme is a postal exchange system that allows the exchange of information between adopters and the adopted child’s birth family in a safe, more secure and confidential way. The exchange is from **adult to adult. A**ny child that contributes to the content of a letterbox exchange must do so with the guidance and support of the responsible adult. If appropriate, and in the child’s best interests, they can become actively involved themselves by:

* helping to choose photos
* drawing a picture
* having a say in what news the adopters share with the birth family
* Older children may wish to send their own note

Adopters have the right to share the information they have received from the birthparents in a manner and at a time that they as adoptive parents feel is right for the child.

## NEGOTIATION OF LETTERBOX ARRANGEMENTS

Openness in all forms needs to be positively explored in adoptions, so that birth parents, adoptive parents, the child (if appropriate considering age and understanding) and the agency are helped to make a good decision as to whether there should be any contact and if so its form and frequency. When considering this can you please consider the relevant points raised below.

Openness should be fully and realistically discussed with birth relatives. It must be made clear that all their wishes may not be met to avoid raising expectations. A child’s changing and developing needs should also be discussed so there is an understanding of the need for flexibility in such arrangements.

The child should be made aware of the arrangements that have been agreed.

Gifts, parcels, money and videos **cannot** be accepted through the scheme. Vouchers are acceptable but only up to the value of £15.

The Letterbox service passes letters, cards or photographs between birth families and adoptive families without names and address having to be exchanged.

**REACHING AGREEMENT**

*The long-term interest of the child should always be paramount*

Clarity from the start contributes to the successful continuation of the letterbox service and it is therefore **vital** to clarify a number of issues with the adopters and birth relatives:

* The agreement is for the exchange to be between **adults** and birth relatives should be encouraged to write their letters to the adopters and not just the child.
* The Letterbox will be able to facilitate **no more than 1 or maximum two exchanges a year** with each nominated party due to the ever increasing demand on the service.
* The timing of the exchanges. We actively **discourage birthdays and Christmas** as this often has the potential of being an emotive time for all parties and can cause adverse reaction for the birthparent, child and the adoptive family. Exchanges at Christmas and birthdays should only be agreed if it is specifically in the child’s best interests*.*
* When exchanging newsletters the adopters and birthparents need to consider how they want to be addressed. Often there has been a meeting between the adopters and birthparents prior to the placement and as such they are likely to know each others first names which they can use when addressing each other. Clarity about this is again very important to facilitate a good start to the exchange process.
* *If cards* are agreed as part of the exchange there has to be an agreement that :

1. The cards are **not** to say “Son” or “Daughter”. The greeting inside should be simple.
2. The birthparent needs to be prepared to sign the card in their first name. The adopters will make it clear in their own way that the card or letter came from the birthparent.

* *If photographs* are agreed you will need to make it clear that this will only mean 1 or 2 of the birth relative who is part of the exchange. The photographs should not include other family members or friends unless specifically agreed.
* ***If birth relatives are to receive photographs they must have signed the enclosed Adoption Contact Agreement, and this must be returned by the social worker together with the Letterbox Core Information Form..***
* If one party fails to comply with the exchange the other party should be encouraged to continue writing in. It is important for the child to know that either their birthparent or adopter remained committed to exchanging the information with the other party. Sometimes the absent recipients come back several years later for this information.

## PROCESS

Once full discussions have taken place with all parties, you should complete the necessary documentation you have received from the Adoption Unit and return it to the Letterbox Co-ordinator via the Courier. Arrangements need to be entered on Agreement Forms, which birth and adoptive parents should have signed and a copy given to them to keep. The arrangement cannot be activated until the ADOPTION LETTERBOX CORE INFORMATION FORM has been returned to the Adoption Unit by the child’s social worker.

Arrangements will be voluntary (unless there is a Contact Order) and there needs to be agreement on all sides*.*

The Letterbox database will allocate an AC number to each child. All files and subsequent paperwork will be marked with this number and it should be used by both families on all their correspondence to the Service. Families should be informed that exchanges should be sent in an unsealed envelope, as the unit will screen all correspondence to ensure that information is appropriate and confidentiality is being maintained. Photocopies will be made of all letters, cards and photographs to cover the event of any losses in the postal system and to provide a file copy for the adopted person who may claim it once they reach the age of 18 if they wish.

The adoption unit will supply leaflets explaining how the Service works and guidance notes for both birth and adoptive families.

All correspondence regarding the Letterbox should be addressed to: -

# FREEPOST RTGH-TRCR-EHXB

# Letterbox Service

Devon County Council

Follaton House

Plymouth Road

TOTNES TQ9 5RS

The Letterbox Co-ordinator is happy to help you set up the Letterbox service and therefore welcomes any queries that you may have. From experience we are aware that if a Letterbox exchange is set up successfully we see the positive results through the ongoing exchanges. Please do not hesitate to contact the Letterbox Service Co-ordinator.