

Adoptive parents views on contact

In this film, an adoptive mother (Liz) shares her experience of contact following the adoption of her son. When the placement for adoption was first made the arrangement was for indirect contact (through **letterbox**). This worked well and built a foundation of trust.

After a few years, the adopted child asked his parents if he could see the grandparents who had kept in touch with him through indirect contact. The adopters discussed this with their social worker and a plan was made for a supported **face to face meeting**. Face to face contact continued to develop from this point. The adopted child is now in his teens and contact has gradually become fully open with visits to each other's homes two or three times a year and other birth family members involved occasionally.

The film is divided into sections, covering several aspects of contact. The film may be viewed as a whole or used to illuminate or prompt discussions on specific points. It may be particularly useful during adopter training.

The sections are as follows:

- 1. An adopter's initial view of contact (0:00 to 3:37)**
In this section Liz discusses her views of contact coming into adoption and the perceived benefits and challenges, including unplanned contact through social media.
- 2. The initial contact plan (3:38 to 6:13)**
The adoptive parent talks about having letterbox contact with the birth grandparents, giving examples of what the letters covered and what helped make this type of contact work well, including the importance of an initial introductory meeting.
- 3. Opening up direct contact (6:13 to 9:47)**
In this section, Liz reflects on the events that led to the decision to open up contact to face to face meetings, how this was managed and supported and what made it work well.
- 4. Supporting children through contact (9:48 to 13:30)**
Liz reflects on the role of contact in addressing unanswered questions regarding the birth parents, developing their child's identity and building relationships. Liz also discusses how the family supported their child at and after each contact session and how it helped build communicative openness.
- 5. Managing the relationship with birth family (13:30 to 14:35)**
In this section, Liz shares her feelings on managing information about the birth parents and how a close relationship developed with the birth relatives, based on trust, respect and shared values.
- 6. Managing social media (14:35 to 17:46)**
This section covers the use of social media by adopted young people for finding information about birth relatives, how parents can support their children through this process, acknowledging children's thoughts and curiosity and the feelings this type of search can elicit.
- 7. The value of contact for adoptive parents (17:46 to 20:13)**
The adoptive mother reflects on what contact has meant for her and her family, recognising the many positive aspects and challenges, and how they managed them.