



Exercise: understanding the benefits of letterbox contact

Research message: when letterbox contact works well it can help adopted children to develop a realistic picture of their birth relatives, answer their questions and help with feelings of loss and rejection.

Adoptive parents value the exchange of letters as a way of keeping the birth family 'alive' in the adoptive family, reducing the child's sense of rejection, answering their questions and keeping up to date with changes in the birth family.

Letterbox contact can help to reassure birth relatives about how the child is getting on, provide an opportunity for them to try and ease the child's sense of loss or rejection and keep in touch with their development, seeing likenesses as they get older. Successful letterbox contact can help to prepare everybody involved for future meetings during childhood or in adulthood.

Writing letters to a stranger is not easy and both birth relatives and adopters often need support with this.

This exercise is suitable for: individual learning; discussions in team meetings, training for social workers, contact supervisors, foster carers, kinship carers and adopters

Listen to the clip of Liz, adoptive mother, talking

- How did letterbox contact benefit this child?
- How did it benefit the adoptive family?
- How did it benefit the birth family?
- What made contact work so well in this particular case?

Notes for trainers

The aim of this exercise is to highlight the benefits of letterbox contact and increase the willingness of both practitioners and adoptive families to promote this.