



Exercise: helping adoptive parents and social workers understand the benefits of contact

Research messages

Post adoption contact can be positive for many children, but plans need to be made on an individual basis, well supported and regularly reviewed. When adoptive parents are helped to understand that contact could help their child, they are more likely to support it.

This exercise is aimed at helping adoptive parents and social workers develop a positive attitude to post adoption contact and gain more understanding of how it can benefit adopted children.

Read the leaflet summarising the research findings (choose the leaflet for adoptive parents or the one for practitioners as appropriate). Then **listen** to the audio clip of young people talking about contact.

Consider the following questions:

- How do you think contact has benefitted these young people? Their adoptive families?
- How has it been difficult?
- What help do you think they needed in coping with contact from their adoptive parents? From post adoption support services?
- What messages do you think these young people might give to future adoptive parents about contact? To social workers who are making contact plans for children?

Trainer's notes

The key message here is how all of these young people had unique experiences of contact and how their needs changed over time. The contact that they had has, to varying degrees, helped them to understand why they were adopted, provided information about birth families and reassurance that they were not forgotten and confirmation that their adoptive families accepted their sense of dual connection to two families. Being involved in decisions about contact allowed the young people to have some sense of control over their lives and avoided the need to seek unplanned contact on-line.

The adoptive families were able to grow closer to their children by supporting them with contact and learn more about their histories. Talking and thinking about birth families and being prepared to adapt arrangements as children got older will have been key to providing this support.

The young people might want adoptive parents and social workers to listen to them, to understand that contact matters and to think about how to make it work.