

SECTION EIGHT

Indirect Contact – Keeping In Touch

(Formerly known as Letter Box)

Overview

This section outlines the process to be followed for creating the Keeping In Touch arrangement between the birth family members, and adopters, which is the indirect contact plan for the child.

Keeping In Touch contact is a formal arrangement for birth parents, and the adoptive parents to share and exchange information about the child as he/she grows up according to a pre-agreed plan. It is a confidential arrangement, made through the Court and placement process, and which will be supported by Adoption Tees Valley until the child reaches the age of 18, or longer if agreed. The correspondence will be sent through Adoption Tees Valley, and no addresses, or contact details will be provided to either party.

Related procedures are

[Referral, Family Finding, Matching and Placement](#)

[Provision of Independent Birth parent Support](#)

Developing the Plan

The Local Authority child's social worker should consider the contact plan for the child, including the plan for Keeping in Touch indirect contact, during care proceedings. It is the responsibility of the child's social worker to discuss with the birth parents what keeping in touch contact means, and its value and importance for the child as they grow up. The child's social worker will consider the frequency, and type of contacts that will meet the child's needs in the future, and enable the birth family and any identified birth relatives, such as siblings, to continue to know how the child is doing. In writing the CPR (Child permanence Report) the child's social worker will set out what keeping in touch arrangements are identified as being appropriate, taking account of the needs of child, and considerations to birth parents and relatives.

Benefits of Keeping In Touch indirect contact

For the adopted child:

- Being able to keep in touch with birth parents or other significant family members where appropriate.
- To know that birth parents, and others are safe and well.
- To gain a sense of past identity and history
- To reduce feelings of loss and rejection

For the birth parent/relative:

- To reassure the family that the child is safe and well

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- For birth parents to know that the child knows they are safe and well
- Opportunity to share news that will help the child as they grow up
- It may be important to the child as they grow up to know that their birth parent has stayed in touch, and may help them make sense of their past

For the adoptive parents:

- To provide important information that may not have been provided at the time of the adoption order
- To receive information about the wellbeing of the birth parent, which help the adoptive parent to reassure the child
- Can help dispel myths and fantasies
- Can help adoptive parents to talk openly with their child about adoption. This can make it easier answer questions and deal with all kinds of adoption issues in the future in a healthy and realistic way.

Linking and matching

The child's social worker will set out the planned keeping in touch requirements in the CPR, and selection/linking with adopters should include full discussion about the planned KIT arrangements, including who correspondence will be shared with, and frequency.

Once adopters are identified, the Adoption Tees Valley social worker will make a visit to birth parents, with the child's social worker to talk in more detail about KIT, and explore the detail of birth parents wishes, and understanding. The ATV social worker will ensure that if not already offered, the birth parent is made aware of the Independent Birth Parent Counselling Service, and the independent support available to birth parents.

Details of the planned contact arrangements should be drawn up into the Keeping In Touch Agreement, which should be specific, and detail each contact arrangement; who with; expectations of each party; frequency of contact; what can be exchanged; "name" agreements for contact.

The Keep In Touch Agreement will be confirmed at the APP meeting, and all details confirmed.

Prospective adopters will be asked to sign at this stage.

The Keep In Touch agreement is to be provided to the ATV Co-Ordinator, who will ensure that the KIT agreements are entered onto the CHARMS system, along with the named worker responsible for the oversight of arrangements in the future.

The Child's social worker will be responsible for ensuring that birth parents have the opportunity to read and sign the agreement. With birth parents' consent, this can be passed to the Independent Birth Parent Support service, to support birth parents with.

Settling In Letter

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The first letter to be provided by adopters to the birth parents will be the settling in letter, which will give birth parents information about how the child has settled. This will be provided at an agreed timescale, but guidance is within 2 months of the child moving in with adoptive parents. The purpose is to help birth parents to know how their child has settled, and to be reassured that they are safe and well.

The need for a settling in letter may be negated where there is a direct contact between adoptive parents and birth parents within a short period following the child moving in to their adoptive family.

Managing Keeping In Touch in the future

Full details of the arrangement should be maintained on the child's Keep In Touch file in CHARMS. Any changes to the arrangement, including changes of address should be changed in the CHARMS system.

Adopters and birth parents/relatives will send in the agreed contact at the specified time(s) of year. Where it agreed between parties, e mailed letters, and correspondence may be sent, and will be retained on the file.

The letter will be recorded on the CHARMS system, by the ATV Co-ordinator.

Before sending on to the relevant party, the co-ordinator will ask the named ATV worker to check that the content is suitable, for the people concerned.

For Keeping In Touch arrangements that took place prior to May 2018, the named ATV worker for the local Authority that placed the child will be asked to check the content.

ATV Co-ordinator will send an e mail to the adopters, and birth parents, to confirm the address to which the post should be sent. If there is no e mail address, efforts will be made to telephone, or contact to confirm the correct address. This is to make reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of the people concerned.

ATV will not exchange presents or gifts larger than an A4 envelope, due to storage and security limits.

Where a letter is received, and the other party does not contact to confirm, ATV will retain this sensitive documentation, in a locked filing cabinet, filed, by child's birth name. A scanned copy will be recorded onto the CHARMS system, but the original will not be destroyed.

Where adopters do not wish to continue to receive the birth family correspondence, this may require some case work involvement to explore reasons and to seek to resolve the issues that are causing concern. Wherever possible the arrangements should be encouraged, for benefit of all parties as detailed above.

Post 18 Arrangements

ATV may be able to continue to facilitate Keeping In Touch beyond the age of 18, where it is requested, and agreed by all parties.

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Following the young person's 17th birthday ATV will make contact with the adoptive parents, and then with the young person to determine the wishes and planned agreements for post 18 arrangements.

Review of Arrangements

It may be necessary to review arrangements if the needs of the child change, or if any parties' circumstances change.

The named worker should undertake the review and ensure changes are agreed and signed, and that the CHARMS system is updated with new agreements, and arrangements.

Birth parents may require support to help them write to their child. It can be a very difficult emotional experience for the birth parent, and support is available through the Independent Birth Parent Support Service.