



Gwasaneth  
**Mabwysiadu**  
Deddwyrain Cymru

South East Wales  
**Adoption** Service

# Post Adoption Contact Information

for Adoptive Parents, Birth Parents, Birth Relatives and Carers



South East Wales Adoption Service co-ordinates the post adoption contact arrangements made for children within the consortium of our five Local Authorities, which include Newport, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Monmouthshire.

## Why Have Post Adoption Contact?

Post adoption contact arrangements are set up prior to a child's adoption and all parties should be made aware of the post adoption contact arrangements via the placing Local Authority. Post adoption contact arrangements are not legally binding, unless an order has been sought from Court, however there is a moral duty for those involved to promote this, in the best interests of the child.

Birth parents may seek leave to make an application for a post adoption contact order. The Court will expect a reasonable explanation as to why adoptive parents are not complying with what was originally agreed in terms of contact and any decision to end contact should be made in writing to SEWAS.

Contact arrangements can be reviewed by SEWAS at the request of any party involved, at any point in the child's life. Any changes made will take into account the child's best interest.

In this leaflet when we talk about siblings, we also refer to their carers, and so this leaflet is also addressed to them. We encourage siblings' carers to contact SEWAS for support in relation to any contact arrangements.

'Keeping in touch with birth family, and especially siblings, should be seen as positive and in the child's best interest' (Good Practice Guide, 2021).

'Post adoption contact is an important part of helping a child understand their identity, of making sense of their heritage and understanding their position in two families' (Good Practice Guide, 2021).

## If you are an adopted child, post adoption contact can help you:

- To understand more about my background.
- To know about changes and events in my birth family.
- To prepare for possible future direct contact where appropriate.
- 'To keep in touch with people who are important to me, where it is helpful and safe to do so' (Good Practice Guide, 2021).
- 'To understand why I could not live with my birth family or could or could not live with my brothers and sisters' (Good Practice Guide, 2021).
- 'Some of the information I learned and photos I saw made me feel like I was learning about myself. Where my nose came from, why I enjoy art so much' (Good Practice Guide, 2021).

## If you are an adopter, post adoption contact can help you:

- To find out information that was not available at the time of the adoption (e.g., regarding a medical condition which has occurred after the child's adoption, and which may be hereditary).
- To maintain a positive link with the birth family that will support the child's identity.
- To have an exchange of general information, interests, hobbies and significant life events.
- 'By keeping the communication open you might receive important information for your child' (Good Practice Guide, 2021).

## If you are a birth parent, sibling, or other birth relative, post adoption contact can help you:

- To find out important information about the child, their health and progress.
- To inform the child about any changes in your own life.
- To maintain positive links with the child.
- To offer reassurance and support that can help the child's sense of identity.
- 'Sibling contact is the most likely form of direct contact to be agreed and sustained' (Good Practice Guide, 2021).
- 'Sibling remote or direct contact has many benefits as a way of keeping in touch from the child's point of view: 'I know they are alright / I know what they look like / I can make them laugh / I know what I can get them for their birthday'. It also has advantages from the adopters' point of view: 'little and often may be better as it becomes part of the ordinary fabric of life' (Good Practice Guide, 2021).

## For All Parties

In order for the child to benefit from post adoption contact, it is good practice for the child to be involved in their contact arrangements from a young age and to be aware of any letterbox contact exchanges, where appropriate.

‘Communicative openness’ in adoption will support connections to be maintained and developed for the child, it allows an opportunity for discussion and to reassure the child/children that however they feel is okay. Maintaining openness is more likely to provide some control over contact for the adoptive family’ (Good Practice Guide, 2021).

We recognise that this can be a difficult task for all those involved, and so we encourage you to access support and advice around any of these issues, by making contact with SEWAS, on the contact details provided at the bottom of this page.

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## How will the Post Adoption Contact work?

The post adoption contact arrangements for the child will be set up at the time of matching, whereby a post adoption contact referral and agreement will be completed by the child’s social worker. A copy of these agreements are signed and provided to all parties involved.

Siblings will require support from their carers within contact and therefore carers will have to be involved when contact plans are discussed, as to whether they can commit to what is being proposed and what support they may require to promote sibling contact.

Once post adoption contact referrals and agreements are completed, a contact file will be opened for the child by SEWAS. The child’s agreed post adoption contact arrangements will be coordinated by the contact coordinator within SEWAS. SEWAS can be contacted at any time within the child’s minority to discuss any issues related to contact.

To note, a child’s contact file will be opened under their birth name and therefore the child’s birth name should be used in any correspondence with SEWAS. This is to ensure the child’s adoption identity remains confidential throughout and all parties involved in the contact can make enquiries with the agency using the same name.

The specifics of the post adoption contact arrangements such as timings of year for contact, when this will start and how parties will be referred to within the contact, will be included within your post adoption contact agreements, discussed at the time of the adoption.

All parties involved in the post adoption contact should consider what is possible for them to engage with and maintain and any long-term implications for themselves and the child. Upon request, SEWAS can support with any contact needs, including offering letter writing support, advice and information and support with any complex contact arrangements.

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## Types of Post Adoption Contact

### INDIRECT CONTACT/LETTERBOX

Examples of indirect contact may include the exchange of letters, cards or drawings via the adoption agency.

This may include the sharing of non-identifying photographs, where this has been agreed and risk assessed.

Any indirect contact will start and take place in line with what has been agreed and included in the contact agreements.

#### **When and where shall I send my letters?**

Please send your letters and cards at the time agreed to

**Letterbox,  
South East Wales Adoption Services Block  
B, North Wing, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mamhilad House, Mamhilad  
Park Estate,  
Pontypool,  
Torfaen  
NP4 0HZ**

Or via email at - [adoption.bgcbbc@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:adoption.bgcbbc@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Please ensure you use the child’s birth name as a reference so that we can match all correspondence with the correct contact file.

## Birth Parents/Relatives & Siblings - What should I include in my letters?

- The child would like to hear about your life, any news, new employment or new interests or hobbies.
- The child would like to hear about how interested you are in their health, development, and interests etc.
- It helps to reassure the child if you include positive messages about the child's new life, adoptive parents, and their adoption.

For example:

*'Thank you for my lovely letter, I look forward to receiving all my letters from you. I am really pleased to hear how well you are doing and how well you have settled.'*

*'You are such a clever boy, are you able to say many words now and can you read any words? Do you like to read any bedtime stories? I like to read too; my favourite book is the 'Three Little Pigs'.*

*'I am looking forward to moving into my own flat soon, where I can have some independence and maybe cook some of my favourite foods, like a Sunday dinner.'*

*'I have just started doing my GCSEs in school, my favourite subject at the moment is PE as I love football and being active. Do you like school and do you have any favourite subjects or interests?'*

Things that **may not be helpful** to include in a letter as it may upset or worry the child:

- Emotive content (E.g., talking about your own emotional struggles, telling the child that you cry thinking about them or information about the reasons as to why the child could not live with you).
- Expectations about the future (E.g., talking about when you may meet the child).
- Asking the child for information, photographs or things which have not been agreed.

Whilst we understand these may be important to you, it may place a burden on the child and therefore we would advise you to seek support or advice from SEWAS, if you are unsure of what to include in your letter.

## Adoptive Parents/Carers – What should I include in my letters?

Think about what the child might like to let their birth parents/relatives/siblings know about them and how they are doing, for example:

- The child's health and development – height, weight, favourite colour, toys, food.
- Their progress at school.
- Their hobbies, interests and what they are good at.
- Their personality and how they get on with friends and family.

For example:

*'She continues to love to sing and dance and likes to put on a show for us and we of course must give her lots of applause and praise! She has recently been in her School Christmas show whereby she sang and danced, we are so proud of her and her achievements. Are there any musical people within your family?'*

*'Overall, she is a healthy and active little girl. She has had a bit of a cough recently; we have taken her to the GP and tried lots of different medicines and remedies and the cough appears to have eased now. We are still not sure of the cause of this and were wondering if there were any health issues of asthma in the family?'*

It is okay to include information about the child's difficulties in a sensitive way and to ask for further information, like health or genetic traits. You can always write a separate letter to the birth relative and ask them to reply in a separate letter, so sensitive information is not included in the child's correspondence. If you are unsure of how to include this information in your letter, you can contact SEWAS for advice.



## There may be some things that are not appropriate to include in a letter to the child or sibling, for example:

- The birth of another sibling or the breakdown of a birth sibling's placement.
- News about serious health conditions or deaths.
- Requests outside of the post adoption contact agreements such as requesting photographs, which the child will not be able to honour.
- To ensure each party's confidentiality is protected, addresses, contact numbers, locations and surnames are not to be included within indirect contact, unless this has been agreed otherwise.

Any significant information as above, you can include in a separate letter to SEWAS or adoptive parents/carers.

You can also contact SEWAS to discuss any of the above issues and how these should be dealt with in a sensitive way.

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## What About Confidentiality?

All the letters received by the Letterbox scheme will be treated as carefully and confidentially as all adoption records. Some basic details will be entered on a computer to allow the system to operate, however we have taken steps to ensure a high degree of confidentiality.

All letterbox exchange items are checked before forwarding on to ensure the content is appropriate and if you, yourself accidentally include confidential information (such as names or address) in your letter, this will be taken out before the letter is sent on or we may ask you to re-write the letter.

All letterbox correspondence is sent by Recorded Delivery. We cannot be held responsible for information lost in the post, but we seek to keep a copy of all material on file.

## Language used in post adoption contact

There needs to be clear agreement regarding the language that will be used to describe people in any indirect, remote, or direct contact. This would be agreed at the time of the post adoption contact agreements being made and should be adhered to. Some adopters are willing to share their first names and will sign their letterbox items in their names and/or the child's first name. Birth parents can be asked to sign with their name or birth mummy/daddy followed by their name e.g., Becky / Birth Mummy Becky, sometimes tummy mummy can be used for younger children. It can be useful to refer to birth parents in the same way they are referred to in the child's life story book.

However upsetting this may be for birth parents, the child will grow up knowing their adoptive parents as their mummy and daddy and therefore, whilst adoptive parents should seek to be inclusive of the birth family, birth parents should be mindful of how they refer to themselves and the impact of this on the child.

Please be mindful when choosing cards of the messages given to the child e.g., relationship specific cards or cards with high emotional messages.

## How long does the indirect contact continue?

The indirect contact/letterbox scheme continues until the child reaches 18 years. We will then write to you and the child at that time telling you that the scheme has ended. The whole of the Letterbox file will then become part of the child's adoption records which are kept for 100 years from the date of their Adoption Order.

Sometimes the arrangements are reviewed, and the letterbox file can be closed sooner where no exchanges are taking place. If one party continues to send correspondence with the view to be kept on file, this can continue until the child is 18.

Where correspondence is late and if we are informed of this by any party involved in the contact, we are happy to send reminder letters, and support so the contact can continue.



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## REMOTE CONTACT

Based on the child's individual needs, a risk assessment being undertaken and with consideration to the persons involved, remote contact can be agreed for the child, via their placing Local Authority. This may be more suitable for siblings, placed in separate placements, for example.

Remote contact would include all forms of online contact, for example video calls and emails, which can be supervised or unsupervised.

Any remote contact will start and take place in line with what has been agreed within the contact agreements. Any support needed to make remote contact successful, will be included within the contact referral and agreements.

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## DIRECT CONTACT

Based on the child's individual needs, a risk assessment being undertaken and with consideration to the persons involved, direct contact can be agreed for the child, via their placing Local Authority. The most common direct contact arrangements are between siblings.

Examples of direct contact may include face to face unsupervised community-based meetings between the child and birth family/siblings, supported by the adoptive parents/carers or if needed supervised by a professional.

Any direct contact will start and take place in line with what has been agreed within the contact agreements. Any support needed to make direct contact successful, will be included within the contact referral and agreements.

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## Other Important Information:

Where informal arrangements have been made for contact to be managed independently, between adoptive families/carers for siblings, for example and this has not progressed as expected, please be advised that support is still available to you, upon request via SEWAS.

Post adoption contact is not a fixed decision and as the child grows and becomes more involved in contact, this may need to be reviewed and changed, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings.

There may also be times when it is not easy to engage in contact arrangements or to send information, but please remember the child may benefit greatly from the contact or communications between their adoptive parents and their birth family. It is also important to birth parents/relatives and siblings to know the child is alive and doing well.

If you are having any difficulties in meeting the agreed terms of the contact arrangements and/or contact is not taking place as planned, please inform SEWAS as soon as possible, using the contact details below.

Please be advised that all parties are to inform SEWAS of any significant changes (e.g., a change of address) or if a significant event were to occur (e.g., a significant change in health, a death or other circumstance).

Please be advised you can contact SEWAS at 01495 355766 or [adoption@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:adoption@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) at any point throughout the child's minority should any issues with the post adoption contact arise or should you require a review of the post adoption contact arrangements.

