

Writing a 'later life letter'

The provision of a Later Life letter is a statutory requirement for all children placed with adoptive parents. They are usually written by the Child's Social Worker in conjunction with the Adopters' Social Worker and are given to the Prospective Adopters.

If it is deemed appropriate, the Child's Birth Family could be asked to write either their own letters to the child or make contributions to the Social Worker's letter.

The expectation is that the letter will be addressed to the child, but given to the adoptive parents for safe keeping. The adoptive parents should receive the letter after the Adoption Order is made and no later than 10 working days after the adoption ceremony, i.e. the ceremony to celebrate the making of the Adoption Order. The precise timing of this will be considered at the placement planning stage and at subsequent Adoption Reviews.

The purpose of the later life letter: the Later Life letter has two purposes: the first is as a letter to be read by the child when deemed appropriate by the Adoptive Parents; the second is as a tool to be used by the Adopters when talking to the Child about their background and history.

What should be included in the letter?

- An explanation of why the Child came into care / was adopted and the reasons and actions that led up to this decision being made. This should include, whenever possible, the people involved in this decision, and the facts at that time. It must be a true account of the process.
- If the Child's birth parent expressed any wishes about the choice of adoptive parents these should be included, e.g. would like him/her to have a sibling.
- As well as being a detailed and honest account of events, the letter should contain descriptions and anecdotes of what the writer remembers about the Child and the Birth Family.
- Birth Parents - try and give a descriptive picture of the Birth Parents. This should include details about their first names, ages, physical characteristics, their personality, academic and employment history, health, their interests and skills. Also with whom they were living at the time of placement.
- Siblings - If the Child has brothers and sisters, similar information should be given. Are they adopted? If they live with the Birth Parents, explain why. The Child needs to know what happened to her/ his brothers and sisters, who cares for them, and if relevant, why there is no contact. Do not provide addresses or other identifying information.
- Child's birth - Information needs to be given about the Child's birth if not already provided in earlier life journey work including weight, time, day, any complications or health issues. Also include the name of the

hospital, who was present, what happened next? Who cared for the Child after his/her birth?

- Contact - Include comments by the Social Worker on any contact between the Child and his or her Birth Parents and any information about any events that relate to the child around this time. Give details of how any agreed contact was decided - whether it is "face to face" or Letter Box. The Child needs to know that Birth Parents and other relatives want to hear about their progress, and that the Adoptive Parents agreed to the contact arrangements prior to placement.
- When writing the letter, try to be balanced about the strengths and the difficulties.
- In the letter, the Birth Parents should be called by their first names and the adopters referred to as "your Parents" or "Mum and Dad".
- Think of yourself as an adopted person, what information would you want, what questions would you ask your Birth Parents?
- It is a good idea to write the letter in sections, for instance the legal situation could be separate from the more personal information. In very difficult situations for example incest or sexual abuse, writing in sections can be helpful so that the story unfolds in manageable parts.
- Some Social Workers may prefer to write two letters to be given at different ages. This practice can also work well where there are difficult messages to communicate.
- Brothers and sisters must have separate letters even when placed together, and this includes twins.
- You should give the date the Adoption Order was granted, the name of the court, and you could include the names and office bases of all the Social Workers involved, although in each case care should be taken to ensure Social Workers are not exposed to any risk; first names may be preferable rather than full names.
- It is most likely that the Child will be given the letter during their early adolescent years, and so the letter needs to be written using language appropriate for the young person.

Talk to the adopters about the letter(s).

- When you have drafted the letter in consultation with the Adopters' Social Worker you must show it to the adopters; they may have extra information that needs to be added. They may also wish to ask for some amendments/different wording. They need to feel comfortable with the content as this will inform the way they help their child to process the letter. If they don't like your letter they most likely won't show it to their child.
- Acknowledge that possible negative issues around the events leading up to a child's birth and subsequent placement may be difficult to convey. The Adopters have to tell this story, and they may need ongoing support from the Post Adoption Support Service to enable them to do this.

And finally...

- Date and sign the letter.
- Keep a copy on the adoption file and send the letter to the Adopters' Social Worker who will give it to the Adopters and explain their responsibilities in sharing the information with the Child at a later date, i.e. that the information should be made available to the Child at a time the adopters consider is appropriate, but before the child's 18th birthday, as at this stage the young person has the right to apply for access to the adoption records, and the information in the Later Life letter will prepare him/her for this.
- The Adopters should be asked for written confirmation of receipt of the letter and their intention to share the information with the Child.

When should the letter be given to the Child?

- The decision on actual timing of this letter being shared is at the discretion of the Adoptive Parents. They will be in the best position to know when the Young Person will be ready to read the letter.

Note: Later life letters have traditionally only been used in adoption cases but increasingly they are being used to convey factual information and memories / anecdotes with other children and young people who are looked after as part of a child's life journey memorabilia. For example a Social Worker who is changing jobs could write a letter about the time he /she has known the Child or a residential Social Worker / Foster Carer when the Child leaves a placement.

For further information:

- The BAAF publication 'Writing a Later Life Letter – Practice Guide' by Fran Moffat includes a number of example later life letters.
- The South East Wales Adoption Service has Practice Guidance, developed by BAAF Cymru, which they are willing to share.
- Example later life letter from Joy Rees 2016 is available on line

Adapted from a piece written by Roz Waterhouse, Associate Trainer, AFA Cymru



AFA Cymru offers advice, training and consultancy to professionals and to members of the public.

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the function $f(x)$ defined by the equation

2. In the second part, we consider the case when the function $f(x)$ is continuous and the function $g(x)$ is discontinuous. In this case, the function $f(x)$ is continuous and the function $g(x)$ is discontinuous.

3. In the third part, we consider the case when the function $f(x)$ is discontinuous and the function $g(x)$ is continuous. In this case, the function $f(x)$ is discontinuous and the function $g(x)$ is continuous.