

LIFE JOURNEY BULLETIN



Welcome to Issue 1 of the Life Journey Bulletin!

These new bulletins will be sent out twice a year – one in the summer and another in late winter/ early spring. These will now replace our Life Journey Work Newsletters.

These new bulletins are designed to be a brief but useful way to disseminate information to both adopters and professionals around different themes within life journey work to support you in your life and practice. These bulletins will sit alongside our new National Adoption Service for Wales website at <https://adoptcymru.com/>, that we are continuing to develop. Within future bulletins we will be directing you to the life journey part of the website so you can access relevant resources, information and updates.

In the meantime, please contact us on the details below with any ideas for content you would like to see on the life journey part of the website. This bulletin will focus on 5 top tips for adopters on life journey work and also 5 top tips for professionals on producing life journey books.

If you have developed anything new to help with good practice, know of any information on delivering life journey work or have any ideas for the life journey work content on the National Adoption Service website; then please contact your regional adoption service life journey work co-ordinator, the National Adoption Service Central Team on contact@adoptcymru.com or the Adoption Support Development Manager on adele.gough@adoptcymru.com

Top 5 tips on life journey work for adopters:

1. Plan ahead

- Get to know your child's story.
- Think about language and it needing to be developmentally appropriate – give information in small pieces that build upon each other over their childhood.
- Practice using the language you need to talk about their birth and then adoption.
- Waiting until the child is older to reveal a child's adoption to him or her is not recommended.
- Be aware of what you might find difficult to talk about – understand your own feelings and be kind to yourself.

2. Talk about adoption early and often

- Begin talking with your children about their birthparents and adoption even before they can talk.
- Do not wait until they ask!
- Provide an open environment – be approachable for the child to ask questions.
- Validate their questions.
- If unsure, press pause – to give time to find the answer or the best way to explain the information.

3. Use truthful and neutral language

- Use non-judgemental language when talking about birth family.
- Accepting and honouring birthparents is accepting and honouring the child.
- Children deserve the truth and are remarkably able to cope with its implications.
- Empathise and respect your child's feelings about their birth family and early experiences.

4. Use Materials and opportunities

- Use life story books, later life letters and letter box contact to talk about your child's story.
- Use stories and films as conversation starters.
- For an older child, be aware of possible triggers and using them as moments of opportunity – such as birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day and school projects (family trees, for example, or an assignment to bring baby pictures from home).

5. Teach your child how to respond to questions and comments about adoption.

- Help them build a clear story that they are comfortable sharing.
- You will be providing the tools to handle awkward situations and to educate others.
- Help your child take ownership of his or her story.



Useful Contacts

Below is a list of the Life Journey Work co-ordinators who are in post across Wales currently. This list is useful to know who to contact in your area if you need support, advice or want access to any training opportunities:

Adoption Mid and West Wales
Sian E Gibbon |
SEGibbon@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

North Wales Adoption Service
Sarah Ryan |
Sarah.Ryan@wrexham.gov.uk

South East Wales Adoption Service
Raluca Miklovits |
Raluca.Miklovits@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Vale Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Service
Tina James |
tjames@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Western Bay Adoption Service
Sarah Vaughan |
s.vaughan1@westernbayadoption.org
Claire Roberts |
c.roberts6@westernbayadoption.org

Top 5 tips for professionals on producing life story books:

1. Use Joy Rees's model

- The structure of this when creating life journey materials is PRESENT-PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE.

2. Use the right language and think about what content is relevant to include in life story books.

- Ensure language is simple and age appropriate.
- Think carefully about dates, social work jargon, legal terminology, quotes from court or other social work documents - these aren't relevant unless their linked with the child's age, own experience and need to be well explained.
- Be consistent in either addressing the child (YOU) or talking about the child (HE/SHE). Confusion can happen easily!
- Once introduced, birth family members should be referred to by their names.
- Avoid vague statements, for example "birth parents loved you but had their own problems and could not care for you" or "your parents couldn't keep you safe" – be specific instead about the reasons why the child was taken into care.
- Do not include surnames of birth family and child's birth surname.
- Birth sign, birth stone, name explanation or people born on same day as the child – this information is not relevant unless named by the birth family as being important to them.

3 . Develop a clear, coherent narrative throughout the life story book.

4. Ensure you proofread the life story book – read it out loud to help you spot mistakes.

5. Seek training, advice and support in your local area. If you have never completed a life story book before, it's essential that you access relevant training.

Difficult Conversations About Adoption – an online support group.

Difficult Conversations about adoption is a support group for adopters.

On the 24th October 2024 Adoption UK Cymru and the Life Journey Work Co-ordinators from across Wales launched a support group for parents to talk all things "Life Journey". This is an online 'Zoom' group which takes place in the evening between 7.30 pm and 9 pm.

If you are an adoptive parent and would like to attend this group please email Philippa Williams.

Her email is philippa.williams@adoptionuk.org.uk

