

Living with the adoption in the longer term

In this section, the birth parents reflect on their experiences of living with the knowledge that their child is adopted, and of managing letter box contact.

Bernadette Particular times are hard at birthdays, my birthday, Mother's Day, Christmas Day, and my daughter's birthday. So they're hard times and also particularly court dates as well, that you never forget. I don't have any contact at all with my daughter face to face. The only contact that I have once a year is ... letter contact. I'm not allowed to put on the letter Mummy, I've got to put my name on it, which I think is wrong when the child knows that you are tummy mummy, from birth. So it is very difficult to write a letter to somebody that you don't even know no more.

Becky Recently I just received a letter from my daughter and it's telling me the things what she's been up to last summer and when I read it, I had tears coming down from my eyes because I feel like that I can't do what like the foster, the adoptive parents are doing. I feel like she's not my daughter. She only knows me as tummy mummy ... It's hard for me to write back to her because I know what I can say in my head but I don't ... when it comes to putting it on paper, it just goes, goes totally blank, my mind goes totally blank and I'm just sitting there with a pen in my hand thinking, oh, what can I write to her and everything else.

Bernadette I think the adoption has worked out very well for her, so I feel quite happy now that my daughter is making a family complete. But then I think, she should have been with me, she's my daughter, she's my family.

Nina Just the word adoption in itself, you know ... I'm not saying that adoption's any worse than losing a child to death ... but losing a child to death ... you don't ... for adoption, you've still got you've lost that child, but to go with it you've got the jealousy that you know someone else out there has your child ... You've still got that every day, not wondering what they would be up to but what are they up to, where are they.

- Nina Subsequent children that I've had have kept me going and I hope ... just hope that my son knew that I loved him, I needed him to know that I loved him and I needed him to know that I didn't want him adopted, I needed ... I needed him to know that ... it didn't mean he wasn't special just because I had other children and they lived with me.
- Letterbox has been hard. I mean, I've, I've always known that my letterbox was set up between myself and the adopters, so I always knew that I was writing to them. But even that was hard ... I didn't ever want my, my son's adoptive parents ... I didn't want to make them feel uncomfortable. My son is their son and I didn't want them to ... I didn't want them to think I was stepping on their toes.
- Ian Well, it's hard to rebuild your life. You've just got to learn to move forward but the adoption is always in front of you. In fact, you've got to be careful who you mention it to cos you mention you've had a child adopted, it's like a label on your back which follows you everywhere. So you're careful the way you mention it. Especially Christmas. That is one of the worst. I just get really fed up. In fact, birthdays and Christmas I don't think exist any more to me cos I just block them out and treat them as a normal day just because there's a piece of my life missing.
- Becky I was working and then all of a sudden I just burst out into tears in front of customers at work and everything else and I just couldn't deal with it any more. What made me hurt was when I see other parents with their children and that I ... like going to the park or doing things with them like swimming, stuff like that ... and I can't. That hurts.