

# Letter Swap is a system for modernising contact from Link Maker

Designed to make contact more individualised, meaningful and rewarding, the early signs are promising. An event held by Adoption England (which supported a pilot of the system) heard how families felt contact was likely to continue for longer, and how agencies could manage arrangements more effectively.



Letter Swap can pave the way to more meaningful and frequent contact and leave adopters and birth families feeling that contact will be maintained for longer, even when only one-way.

**Less delay, more engagement.** Today, everyone expects to be able communicate conveniently and without delay – Letter Swap brings this to post-adoption contact. Rather than a letter disappearing into a 'black-hole', families can immediately see when something has been received, and read. A one-click 'acknowledgement' can show appreciation for the contact, even when a reply may be delayed or not possible.

**More flexible.** Letter Swap opens-up new possibilities that can make contact feel more meaningful and less intense and help children and birth relatives to feel more connected, especially for families open to communicating 'little and often'. It is also easier for children to be involved, with options to share audio and video clips, images, and brief text messages.

**More organised.** All contact exchanges are kept in chronological order, alongside notes and internal messages, making it easy to find information when replying and giving confidence that nothing will be missing when the time comes for a young person to have access.

**More secure.** Conventional letters and email have potential for inappropriate information to reach the wrong hands. Letter Swap is fully GDPR compliant, and security assured, and ties everything down in a clear, easily understood way to reduce the risks.

*"You can ask questions throughout the year...I love that. It has been every couple of weeks since it started...it's brilliant...Last one I got was when daughter's tooth had fallen out and they wanted to know when my first tooth had fallen out, so I responded". (birth parent)*

As with family-finding, Link Maker is constantly seeking new ways to improve contact, and we want users to feed into this ongoing development.

### Flexibility

- Letter Swap helps even when one or both families prefer to use conventional methods. Agencies can upload materials to be accessed by families that are on the system, or simply to act as a record to be stored securely for future reference.
- Everything on the system can mirror current practice – or accommodate new things you would like to try. Existing cases can be created and managed flexibly and contact agreements can easily be replicated.

### Better communication

- Families are automatically kept up-to-date via email or text, for example when something new has been received, or when an agency has checked a letter draft.
- Staff can receive notifications on a case-by-case basis individually, or as a team.
- Everyone can see when anything has been sent, received and, crucially, read.
- Letter-box staff can keep in touch with all families and send all types of media. If necessary, draft communications can easily be passed back to families with comments.

*“..now I don't have to [file printed letters away] so I just log in and it's all in one place and it's there as and when he wants to access it when he's older”.*  
*(Adoptive parent)*

### Control

- Contact arrangements can be fully tied-down as to what can be sent and when. Where appropriate and helpful, this can be relaxed to allow more regular and informal exchanges.
- On a case-by-case basis, contact can be set to require an agency check, or for the content of communications to be available to the agency.

### Planning & monitoring

- The home page for staff shows everything pending, for example agency checks to complete, or new messages received.
- Letter-box teams can easily see contact that is due, or overdue.
- When contact is due or overdue, families are automatically alerted by text or email.

### Record keeping

- Team members can record notes to cases and letterboxes, assign them to others, and pin critical information for the whole team.
- Teams can define their own categories of case notes to enable tracking and monitoring of particular information or activity.

### Security

- Using Letter-Swap instead of letters or email gives you the confidence that all data-protection obligations are being met.

*“We have been using Letter Swap for a month ... it already feel more natural, and I feel the relationship has the necessary space to for us to develop trust, and a meaningful relationship” (adoptive parent)*

New users are fully supported, with free training, trials and discounts for Link Maker customers.

Get in touch for an online demonstration to help your team assess how Letter Swap might fit with your existing practice.

A brief introduction video, and the full video of the Adoption England event on modernising contact, are also available on request.

Call us on 0800 368 8549 or email [support@linkmaker.co.uk](mailto:support@linkmaker.co.uk)