

User guide

For birth family members

Version 3.1 September 2025

Link Maker Systems

support@letterswap.co.uk

<http://www.letterswap.co.uk>

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Introduction

Letter Swap is a website for post-adoption contact. Once invited to use it, you can exchange letters, pictures, videos, voice messages and short messages in a safe and secure online space.

Agencies began trialling Letter Swap in 2022 as a way of making contact more up-to-date. The aim is to reduce delay when sending information via agencies, and to make it easier for everyone to know what is happening, and when messages they have sent have been read.

You can use Letter Swap in a browser on any smartphone or computer. In this guide you will see mobile views outlined in grey and desktop views in blue.

Registration

To begin using Letter Swap, the authority or agency that arranges your contact will need to invite you via email.

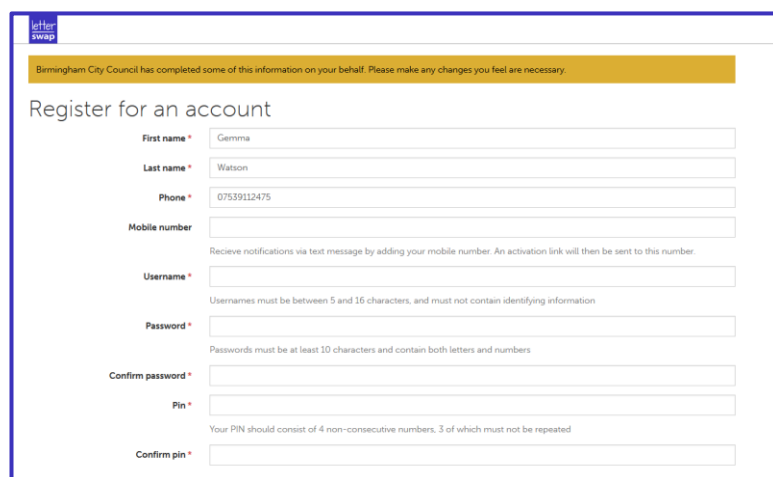
Invitation to register

Once you receive your invitation email, click the link to create your account. Most of your information will have already been filled in.

At this stage you can opt to receive notifications of new communications via text by completing the mobile number field.

Take note of your username, password, and PIN as you'll need these to login again.

You can then login at www.letterswap.co.uk on a phone, tablet, or computer.



The screenshot shows the 'Register for an account' page. At the top, a yellow banner states: 'Birmingham City Council has completed some of this information on your behalf. Please make any changes you feel are necessary.' Below this, the form fields are pre-filled with the following information:

- First name ***: Gemma
- Last name ***: Watson
- Phone ***: 07539112475
- Mobile number**: (empty field)
- Username ***: (empty field)
- Password ***: (empty field)
- Confirm password ***: (empty field)
- Pin ***: (empty field)
- Confirm pin ***: (empty field)

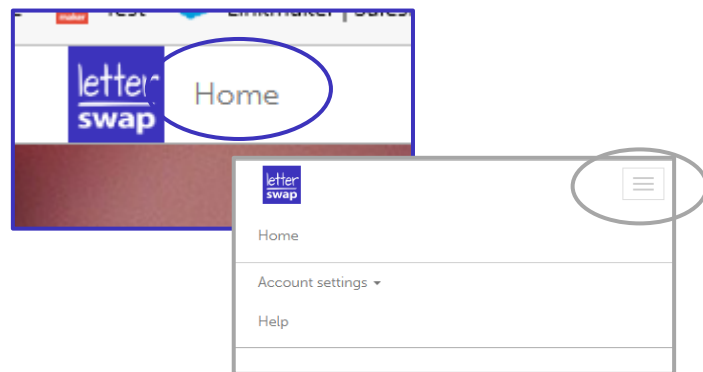
Helpful text and instructions are provided for several fields:

- Below the mobile number field: 'Receive notifications via text message by adding your mobile number. An activation link will then be sent to this number.'
- Below the username field: 'Usernames must be between 5 and 16 characters, and must not contain identifying information.'
- Below the password field: 'Passwords must be at least 10 characters and contain both letters and numbers.'
- Below the pin field: 'Your PIN should consist of 4 non-consecutive numbers, 3 of which must not be repeated.'

About your homepage

When you log in, your homepage will show any 'letterbox links' you have. A letterbox link is a contact arrangement with the adoptive family

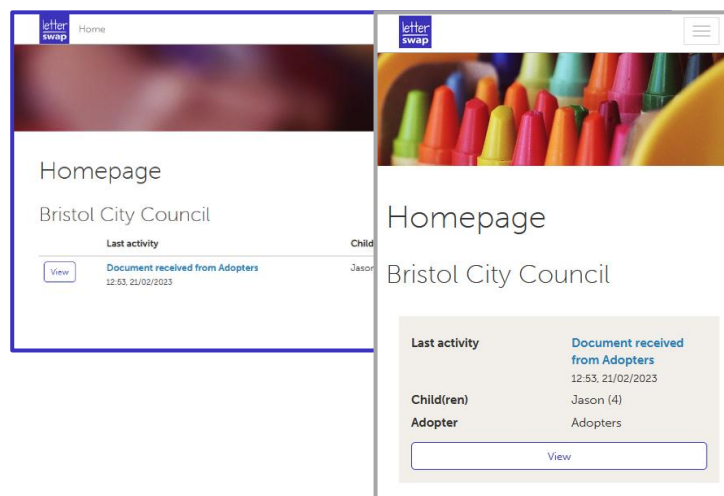
You can always find your home page from the 'Home' menu.



Alongside any letterbox links you can see which child or children it is about.

You can also see a preview of the last activity.

To open a letterbox link, in order to read or send new contact, click the 'View' button.



Letterboxes

The letterbox page is where you can send and read any communications.

Letterbox permissions

Each individual letterbox you have can have different preferences set, depending on your contact agreement. These are set by your Letterbox team. You can see the permissions on the right of your letterbox page (desktop) or by clicking 'view letterbox details' (mobile).

- View content – whether or not your letterbox team can see the communications being sent.
- Agency check – whether your communications will be checked and approved before being sent on.
- Contact schedules – this can set how many communications you can send, and when.
- Contact types – what types of communication you can send, e.g., messages, documents, photos, videos or voice messages.

Letterbox details

- Content available to organisation
- Organisation check not required
- Next contact due on Sep 2023

Contact schedule

Birth family member

- February and September.
- Min. 3 communications per month

You can message your organisation at any time about any concerns you have regarding this letter box link.

Contact details

Birth family member

Name: Gemma Watson

Desc: Birth mother

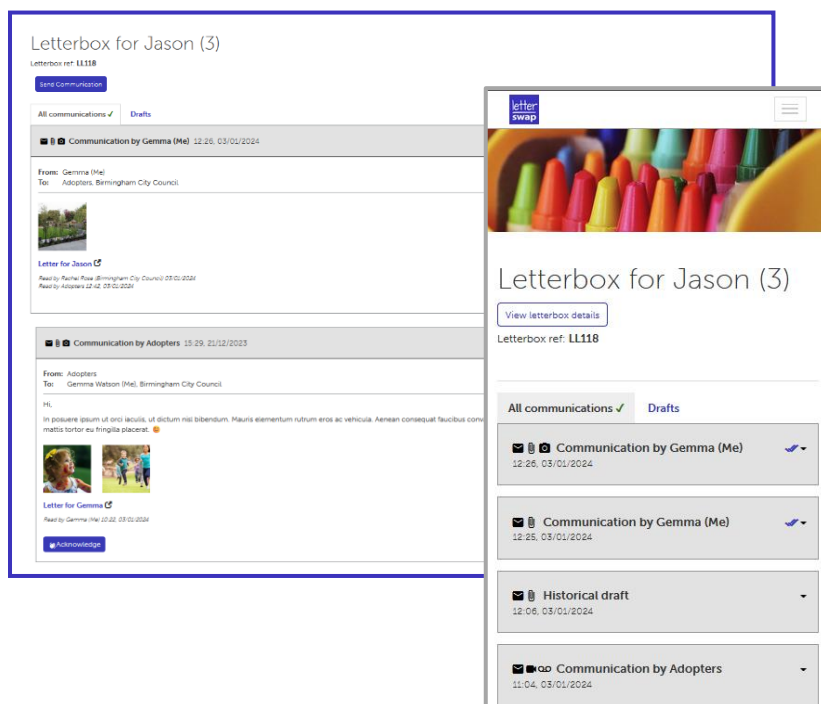
Email: GemmaWatson@altesting.co.uk

Phone: 07539 118698

Letterbox discussions

Anything you have sent or received is shown in the 'All communications' tab in the letterbox.

The 'Draft' tab shows anything that you have created but not yet sent.



Creating communication

Thinking about what to send?

A message - This is more like a text-message than a letter; short and snappy, you can even add emojis. It might be quicker and easier to read and reply to, and better suited if your contact is more frequent.

A document - This is for you to send a more traditional letter that you have already created, either on a computer or by photographing or scanning a hand-written letter.

Images - This could be photographs of people where appropriate but could also include photos of things that are important to a child, such as a favorite pet or place.

Videos - This could be clips of you talking, where appropriate.

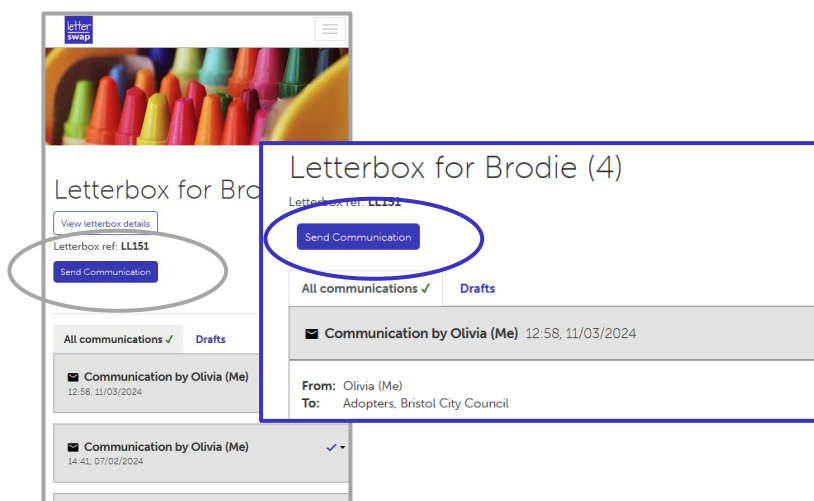
Voice messages - You might find it easier to simply talk, rather than compose a message or record a video.

Don't forget to check carefully for anything in the communication that you wouldn't want to be seen or heard.

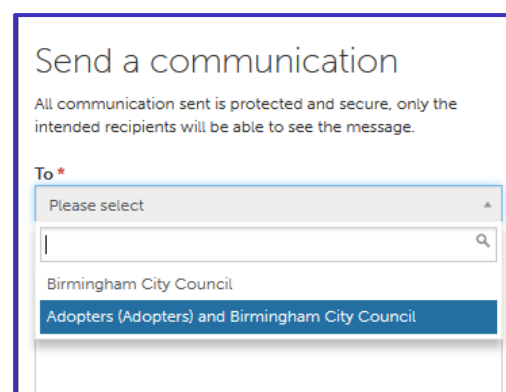
Sending communication

Click the 'Send communication' button

On a mobile, do this by clicking the 'plus' symbol at the bottom of the screen.



Next, click the **To:** field to choose who to send the communication to. The options given will depend on how your letterbox team have set-up things up.



The options shown on the send communication form will depend on the letterbox permissions set by your letterbox team.

If you are sending a message, simply type into the message box.

Scroll down to see any other options.

To send voice messages, click to record voice message, click the stop button when you are finished. The recording will then appear on the page for you to replay or delete.

To send images, click 'Add images' and select up to 10 images.

To send a document, click 'Add document' and select it from your device. Once selected you can edit the name of the document. You can add up to 5 documents.

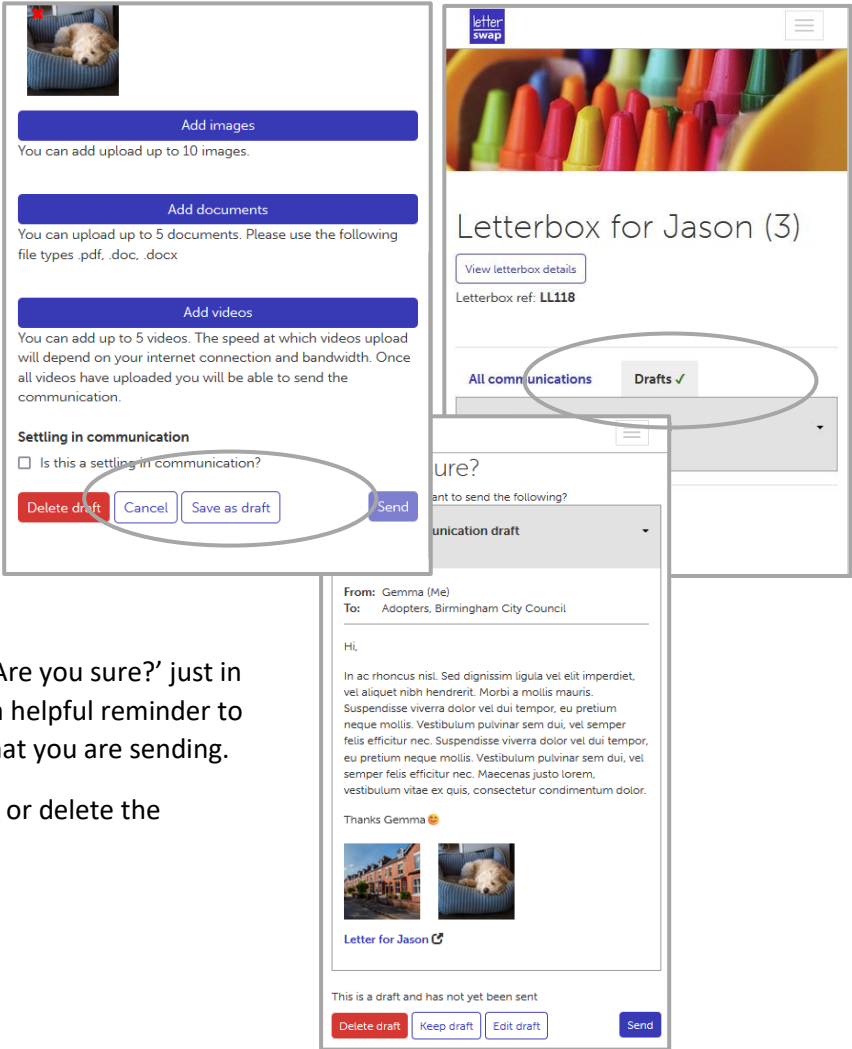
To send videos, click 'Add videos' and you can select up to 5 videos, with an optional message.



Using drafts

If you are not ready to send something but want to come back to it later, click 'Save as draft'. It will then appear in the 'Drafts' tab on the letterbox page.

When you are ready, simply click the 'Send' button in the right-hand corner.



Are you sure?

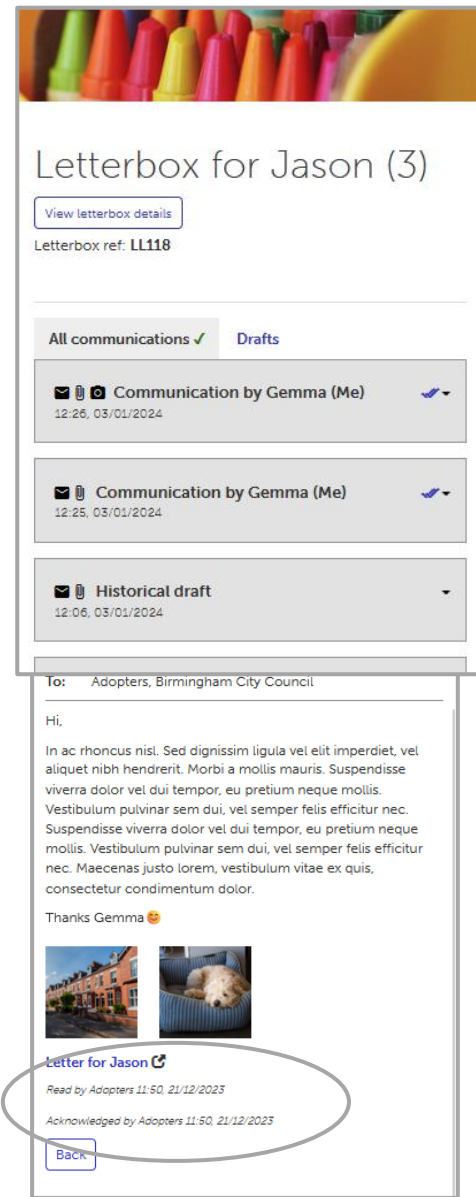
When sending you will always be asked 'Are you sure?' just in case you clicked by accident. This is also a helpful reminder to double-check that you are happy with what you are sending.

You also have the option to [edit the draft](#) or delete the communication.

Confirmation of delivery

A blue tick shows that a communication has been sent by you.

A double blue tick means that what you sent is now available to the adopter (after any processing and checking has been done).



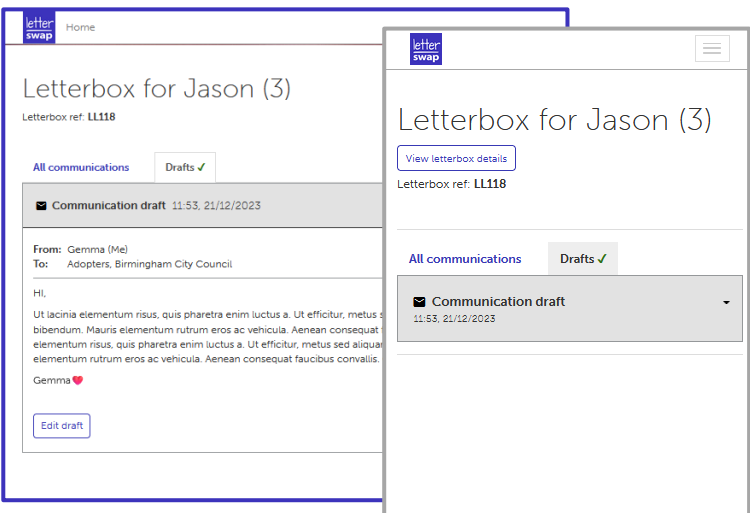
Read receipts

You can see who has read what you have sent, and when, at the bottom of each communication.

Editing a draft communication

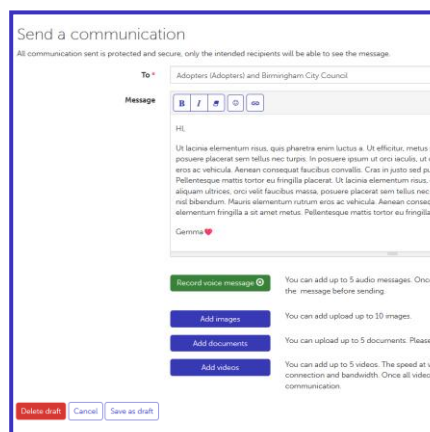
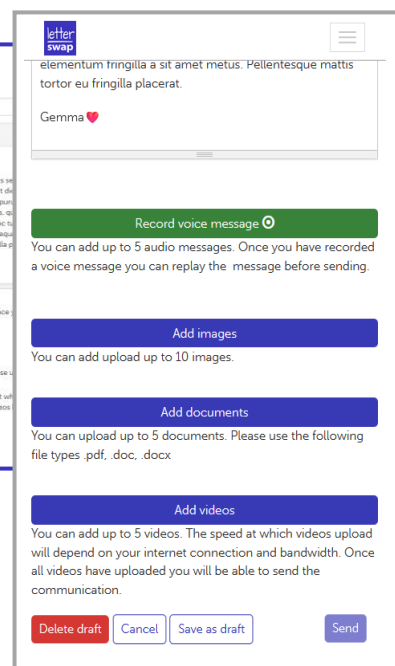
You can find your draft communications in the 'Draft' tab.

To edit something you previously saved, click 'Edit draft' (desktop) or click the communication itself (mobile), then 'Edit Draft'.



You then have options to edit the message, delete documents or images and reupload them.

You can then choose to delete the communication, save again as a draft, or send.

Receiving communications

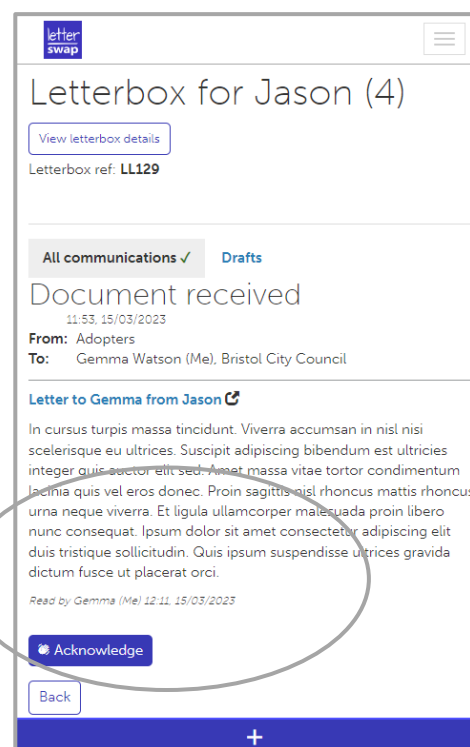
When you have been sent something new, you will receive an email. A link in the email will take you straight to the right letterbox, or you can log in later and find the letterbox.

Read receipts

Once you have gone to the letterbox with the new communication, the person who sent it will see it marked as 'read'.

Acknowledgements

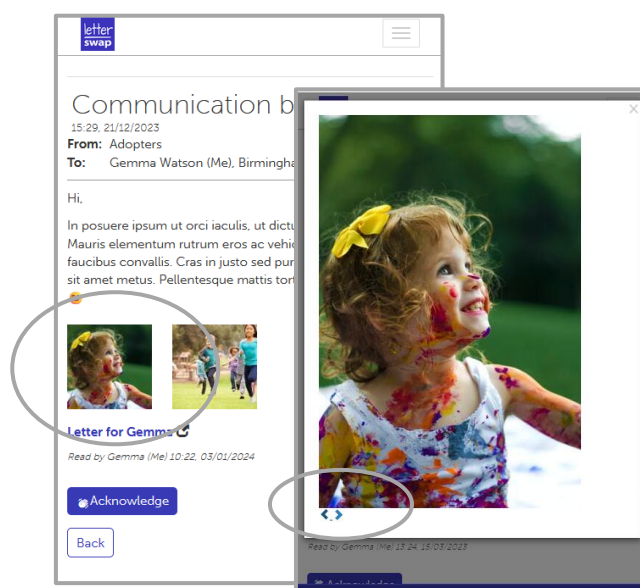
Sometimes you might not be ready to reply to something you have been sent or might be unable to. In these cases, if you would like to show the sender that you have seen it as a quick 'thanks', you can click the 'Acknowledge' button.



Viewing/downloading images

Click on the small thumbnail images to enlarge the pictures on the screen, you can then use the arrows to scroll through the images.

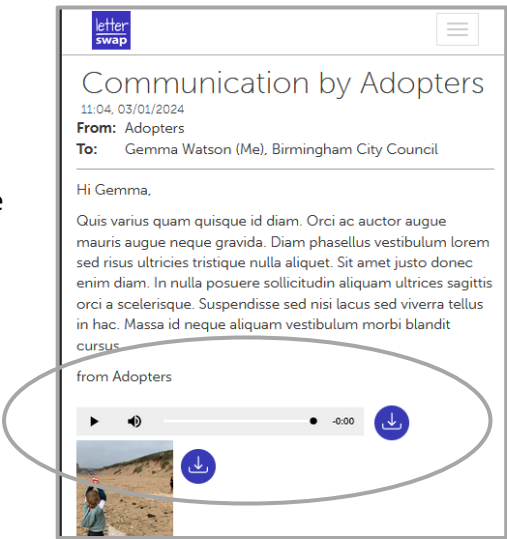
Once enlarged, to download the images on a desktop right click on the images for standard menu options. Or on a mobile use touch and hold for the save and print options.



Listening/downloading voice messages

Click on the play button of the audio player to listen to the voice message.

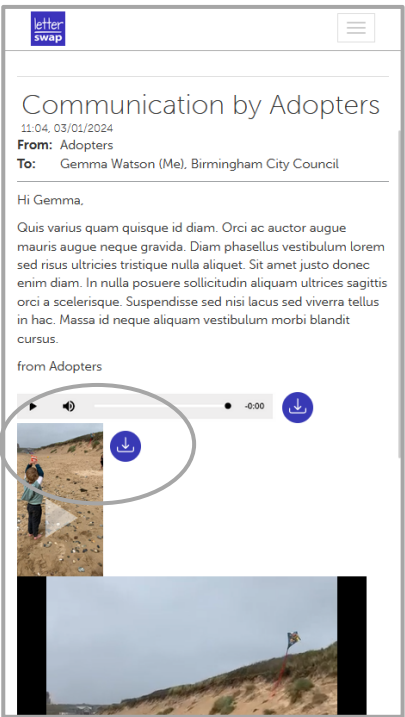
You can use the download button to download the audio files to the download folder on your device.



Viewing/downloading videos

Click on the play button on the video thumbnail to play the video in the application, with options of increasing to full screen.

You can use the download button to download the audio files to the download folder on your device.

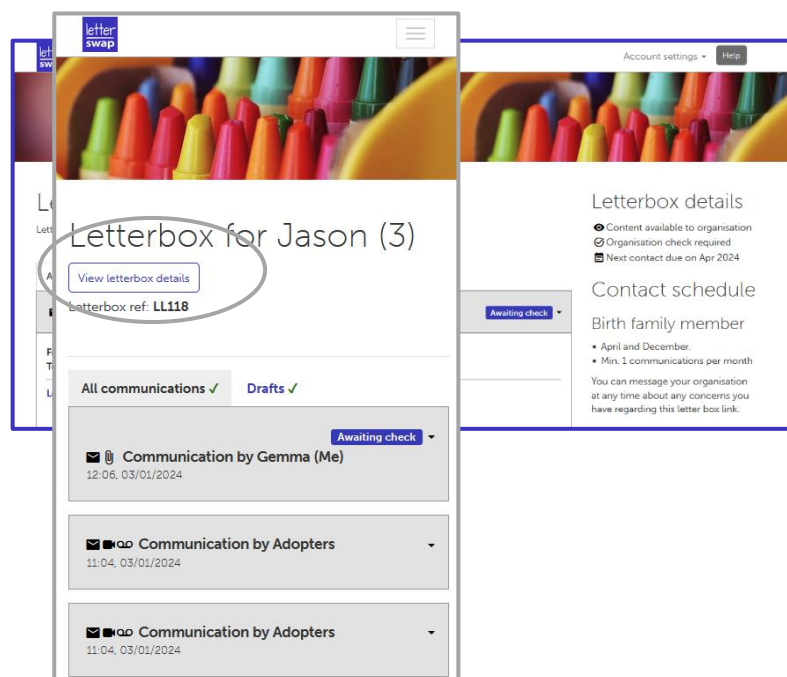


Agency Check

If your letterbox team is checking what you send to the adopters, then this will be shown in the left hand side, or by clicking 'View letterbox details' on a mobile.

When they have checked what you are sending, your agency can send it on, or return it you with suggested changes.

Once your communication has been passed on and received, the 'Awaiting check' label will be replaced with the receipt ticks.



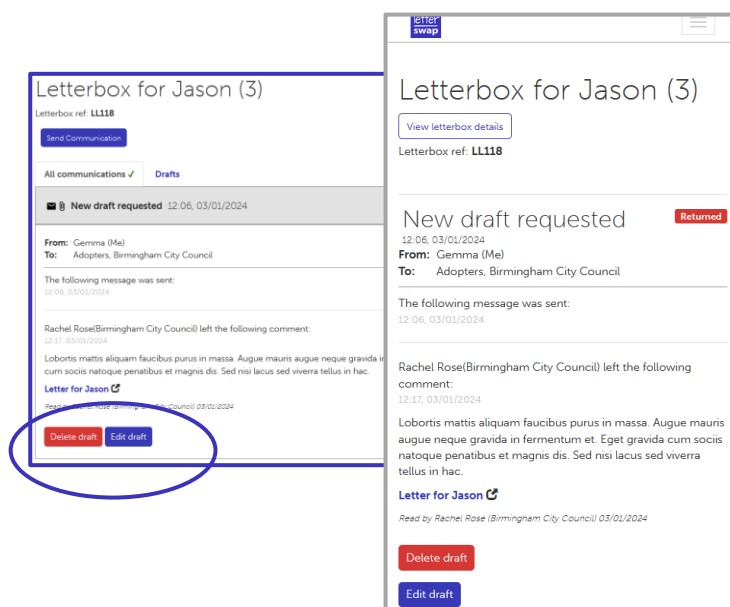
New draft requested

When your agency wants you to make changes to something, you will receive an email telling you that a new draft has been requested. The link in the email will take you to the right place.

Your letterbox team will add comments for you about any changes they are suggesting.

You can either edit your original draft or delete it and start again.

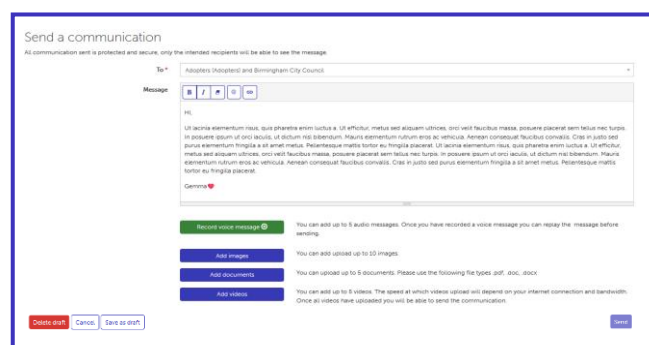
If you have any questions or concerns about what you are being asked to change you can message your letterbox team directly.



Editing a draft

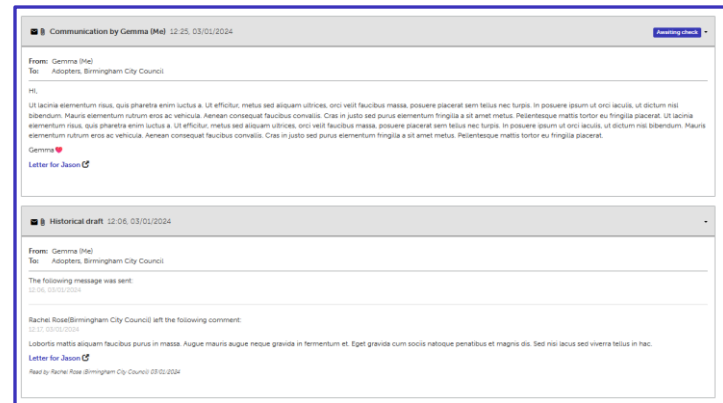
When you 'Edit draft' you can change any message and upload a new document or image. Any comments from your agency are also shown for reference.

Click 'Save' to resubmit your communication.



History of drafts

You can always see a history of any deletes, edits or re-submissions. This is only visible to you and your letterbox team.



Communicating with your letterbox team

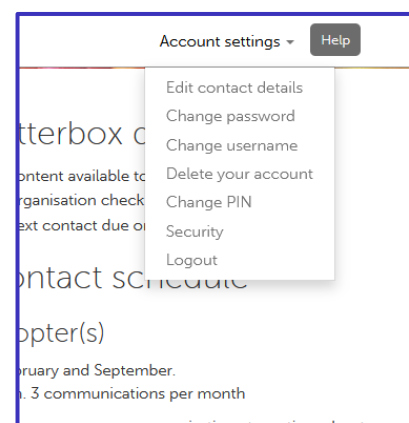
You and your letterbox team can always exchange messages with each other at any time.



Managing your account settings

Go to the 'Account settings' menu at the top if you would like to:

- Edit your address and contact details
- Change your username, password, or PIN



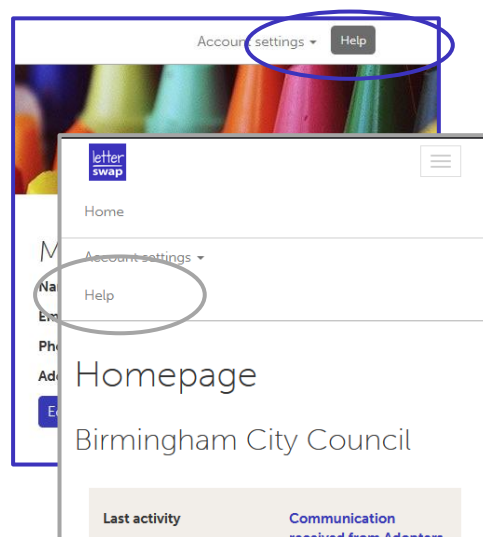
Finding further help

Letter Swap's friendly support team are always happy to help when you need it. Click 'Help' at the top right of your screen for a contact form. On a mobile, go to the 3 line symbol ('hamburger' menu), then 'Help'.

You can also call us on [0800 368 8549](tel:08003688549)

Our telephone lines are open 9:00am - 5pm, Monday to Friday. Cost of the calls will vary but will be charged at the standard rate from your service provider.

Or you can email support@letterswap.co.uk



If you have any technical questions about using Letter Swap, please contact our support team by calling [0800 640 6690](tel:08006406690). For any other questions, please speak directly with your letterbox team.