

What do Early Permanence Carers tell us?

"I didn't know what to expect and there were times when it was really emotional but I am so glad we had Sharing Stories involved"

(Sharing Stories EP carer)

"Meeting our child's birth family meant so much to us, it was emotional but I am sure it will help us to be more positive about them in the future – that has to be a good thing"

(Sharing Stories EP carer)

What do Birth Parents tell us?

"Sharing Stories has really helped us come to terms with the fact that our child is not with us anymore".

(Parents of a relinquished baby)

Sharing Stories contact details:



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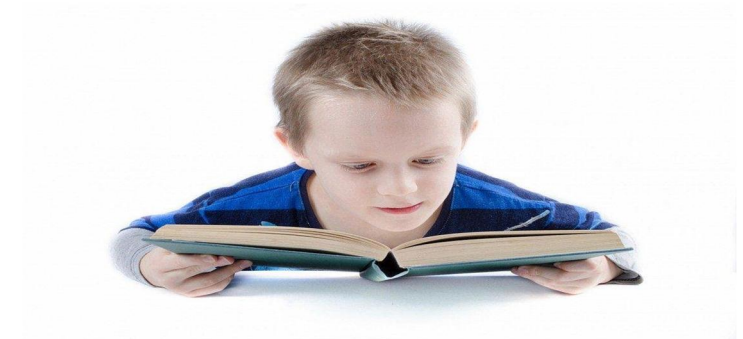


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Sharing Stories Information for Early Permanence Carers



What is life story work?

Life Story Work is how children who are permanently placed away from their original family make sense of the time line of their lives, the experiences that have affected them and their genetic heritage.

It is an ongoing process that begins before placement and continues into adulthood. Children sometimes need the input of trained therapists who can offer therapeutic life story work interventions but not always. However, permanently placed children always need to know how they came to be placed and where they came from. Every family is different and every story is multi-dimensional.

What is Sharing Stories?

Sharing Stories is a project that works with birth families to collect more detailed life story data than may be available otherwise and then with EP carers and adopters to support them in their telling of these stories to their children. Adopter preparation provides an introduction to therapeutic parenting and the sharing of life stories is an important aspect of the ongoing support that therapeutic parents provide for their children.

The involvement of Sharing Stories offers the child and their permanent family better information, a better understanding of the people to whom they were originally connected and support in the telling of life stories. It also offers birth families the opportunity to share information that their child may not otherwise have access to and for them to experience a sense of inclusion at a very difficult time.

How does Sharing Stories work?

Sharing Stories works alongside the birth parents involved in the case without impacting the court proceedings. Conversations are confidential (unless safeguarding policies apply) and Sharing Stories does not report back to social workers, or anyone else. Data such as stories, objects and pictures are shared directly between the birth family and the adopters, usually after the court has made a placement decision.

Why now, can't it wait?

There are pros and cons of carrying out this kind of work during a period of uncertainty but the earlier that birth families are engaged the more useful their invaluable contribution is likely to be. An ongoing EP case is a complex situation for all involved. It can be a difficult time for both birth parents and EP carers but the aim of starting early is to ensure that we don't lose contact with the birth family who have valuable information to give.

Will I have to meet the birth family?

Sometimes, if all parties are comfortable with the process, supported face to face meetings are arranged between birth families and EP carers/adopters. These are always carefully planned and risk assessed and the conversation is facilitated by an experienced mediator. You will not be pressured to meet the birth family.

What is the project's aim?

By respecting the roles and valuing the input of both families, Sharing Stories seeks to support the ongoing work of adoptive parents, therapists and associated professionals in the support of adopted children. We know that good quality life story work is important to child wellbeing and placement success. Adopters tell us:

"I wish I had known more about my child's birth family, it would have made things so much easier for us to support him as time went on"

(Adopter of older child)



Early Permanence carers are encouraged to contact Sara Stocks, Sharing Stories Mediator, directly with any questions or concerns that they may have.