

## 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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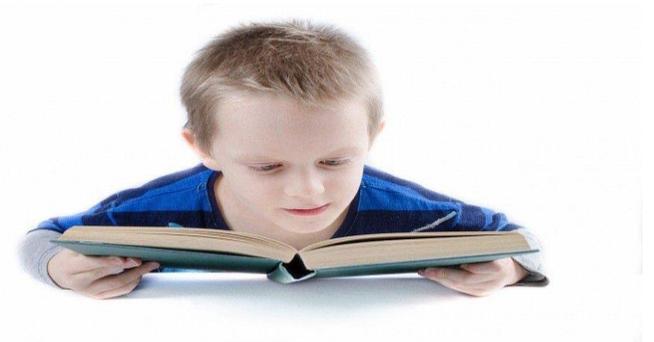
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# Sharing Stories



## 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 and richer life story information than may otherwise be available. Sharing Stories also supports EP carers and adopters to share and tell 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 richer 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 child's birth parents without impacting the court proceedings. Conversations are focussed on collecting life story data for the child (stories, photos, objects) and the production of their life story book. This will be shared with the local authority and yourselves when the court has decided on the permanent home for the child. If the birth parents consent some information may be shared prior to this.

### **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?**

If the court decides the child should be adopted and all parties are willing and comfortable with the process, supported face to face meetings can be 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 helping adopted children understand their story. 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 Hannah Walker and Eve Payne, Sharing Stories, Life Story Book Workers directly with any questions or concerns that they may have.**