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**Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP**  
Secretary of State

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0370 000 2288 [www.education.gov.uk/contactus/df](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus/df)

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
By email: [george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk)

19 January 2022

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of 4 January, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Ms Lucy Clarkson of L36 8ET, regarding Letterbox contact between adopted children and their birth families.

I am grateful to you for sharing Ms Clarkson's concerns and to Ms Clarkson for highlighting Pause's Time to Deliver report, which I read with interest. As Ms Clarkson may be aware, local councils are required to make a range of services available to birth relatives, including counselling, advice, and information and assistance in relation to ongoing contact with the child who was adopted.

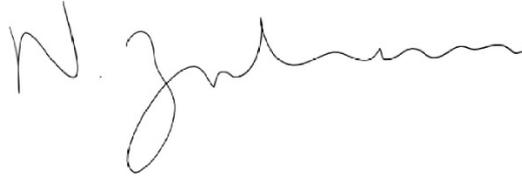
Where ongoing contact with an adopted child is to take place, support for birth parents or family members can help to ensure that the contact is a positive experience for the adopted child. Having some contact with birth parents, grandparents and siblings may play an important role in helping children understand their past and identity.

Decisions about contact should always be on a case-by-case basis and in the best interests of the child. Although face-to-face contact between an adopted child and their birth parents has traditionally been rare, we know that some adopters would like more support with face-to-face contact as children enter adolescence and start to raise questions about their birth family or try to find them via social media. Furthermore, in today's society, contact might also happen via social media without the consent of the family or adopted child and where this happens support also needs to be provided.

I hope it will assure Ms Clarkson to know that, in our recently published adoption strategy, we committed to working with regional adoption agencies to develop and trial what good practice around contact looks like, with a view to setting national standards in this area. In line with this, her feedback is very helpful.

Thank you for writing on this important matter. I hope that Ms Clarkson will find this reply useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Zahawi', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP**  
**Secretary of State for Education**