

Keeping in touch plan for Arlo Hopkins: adopters identified

Arlo is a seven-month-old boy. He is the only child of Dell, a Black Christian British man with some learning difficulties who lives with his Mum, and Rian a white woman who struggles with drug misuse. Arlo was conceived during a brief relationship and his parents never lived together. Rian's current partner has a history of criminality, domestic violence and drug dealing. Arlo has been in foster care since birth due to concerns about the history of neglect and domestic violence. Rian's parents have not been willing to talk to social workers or felt able to meet Arlo. Arlo's maternal half siblings, Dylan and Roxy, are settled in adoption. Rian does not always manage to come to family time and is sometimes pre-occupied during visits. Dell is growing in confidence playing with Arlo with support from his mother and the family time worker. The plan for Arlo is adoption at some distance from his birth family; half an hour's drive from Dylan and Roxy.

What is the purpose of keeping in touch?	Who could meet this need?
Maintain relationships, ease the pain of separation and loss.	Arlo needs to see his foster carers when he moves into adoption as they are his primary attachment figures. The other child they care for has a good relationship with Arlo and always makes him laugh. They will miss each other.
Assure a child they are loved and remembered and that connected adults are alive and well.	Arlo's birth parents and paternal grandmother.
Supporting the child's understanding of their life story and to help children ask questions and have conversations with carers/adoptive parents.	Arlo's birth parents and paternal grandmother.
Help children to understand their identity, family history, culture and religion now or in the future.	Dell (Arlo's birth father) and extended paternal family could all help Arlo understand his birth family's strong connection to the local church and their Jamaican history. Rian (birth mother) might be able to help with this longer term, as well as maternal grandparents.
Build relationships and a potential source of support and connection to wider family in adulthood.	Dell and paternal grandmother. Dylan and Roxy (siblings). Rian is too angry to think about this at the minute.
Give permission to settle in a new family.	Foster carers. Dell and paternal grandmother. Rian is not able to do this at present, but this might change.
Provide a reality check, help reduce risk of secret, unplanned contact.	Rian.
Which of these relationships needs to be prioritised at the moment? Revisited longer term?	Foster carers as Arlo settles in. Dell and paternal grandmother. Dylan, Roxy, Rian and maternal grandparents over time.

Siblings/Cousins	Name: Dylan and Roxy
	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Children/young people want to keep in touch – Dylan and Roxy are keen to meet their little brother. > Visits can be activity based; chance to build up good memories. > Adopters with similar values –both value family and community. > Families live relatively close. <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Adopters with different backgrounds – Arlo’s new family are wealthy and well-travelled. Roxy and Dylan’s adopters have never left the village they grew up in and work in the care sector.
For Connected Adults	
Factors relating to Arlo	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Arlo placed in infancy. > Absence of major behavioural/mental health problems. > Healthy psycho-social development. > Arlo has not witnessed/does not imitate violence.

For Connected Adults

Factors relating to the carers/adopters

Strengths

- > Involved in planning, trained, prepared and supported.
- > Realistic understanding of potential risks and reasons why Dell and Rian could not care for Arlo.
- > Resolved states of mind in relation to own loss/abuse.
- > Constructive, collaborative approach.
- > Sensitivity, empathy, reflective capacity.
- > Communicative openness – comfortable talking and thinking about Arlo's connection to birth family.
- > Adopters feel empowered to take control of, support and adapt arrangements with paternal family.

Challenges

- > Adopters feel under pressure to agree to maternal contact.

Birth father and paternal grandmother

Factors relating to Dell and grandmother

Strengths

- > Has never been Arlo's primary carer or was not involved in the abuse or neglect of him.
- > Generally constructive and collaborative approach – they are working well with foster carers.
- > Relatively free of significant personal difficulties.
- > Reliable and punctual.
- > Can support Arlo as a member of their family – they recognise they cannot care for Arlo and want the best for him.

Birth father and paternal grandmother

Factors relating to relationships between to Arlo, Dell, grandmother and adopters

Strengths

- > Adopters, Dell, and grandmother have met up and this went well.
- > Dell, and Arlo's grandmother feel relieved that Arlo is going to be adopted out of the area where he will be safe, and they want him to have a family. Adopters recognise the importance of keeping in touch.
- > Arlo has a secure attachment to his foster carers, and this should help him to build trust in his adopters.
- > Arlo has a limited relationship with Dell and his grandmother at present, with potential for positive relationships to develop.
- > Interactions during visits are positive and non-abusive with his grandmother's support.
- > There are no risks to adopters.

Conclusion:

Good prospects for face-to-face contact.

Birth Mother

Factors relating to Rian

Strengths

- > Has never been Arlo's primary carer.
- > Mostly attends contact reliably.

Challenges

- > Rian currently struggles to accept the harm the older children suffered as a result of violence and drug use in the home.
- > She is involved in drug misuse and in a violent relationship.
- > Persistently late.
- > Currently very angry about the plan for adoption.

Factors relating to relationships between Arlo, Rian and adopters

Strengths

- > Arlo's existing relationship with Rian is generally positive and he seems happy to see her.
- > Interactions during visits are positive and non-abusive.

Challenges

- > Adopters feel uncertain about benefit of keeping in touch with Rian. They struggle to understand why she has not been able to leave her violent relationship. They are doing some reading about domestic abuse to try and learn more so this may change.
- > Rian is not currently able to think about relinquishing her role as Arlo's mother. This can change over time.
- > Rian did not feel able to meet up with adopters or hear any information about them.
- > Rian has threatened to get her friends to find out where Arlo lives. Adopters feel fearful of Rian, her partner and his criminal associates.

Conclusion

Significant challenges to making face-to-face contact safe and positive at present – but this could change with time. Indirect contact can help provide a reality check, assurance that Arlo has not been forgotten and offer reassurance of her safety.

Provisional Contact Plan	Provisional Support Plan
<p>Foster carers Informal contact from the time that Arlo joins his adoptive family to help him settle and ease his loss. They will write a letter for later life and contribute to Arlo's life story book.</p>	<p>Support will be available from supervising social worker and adoption social worker.</p>
<p>Dell and paternal grandmother Informal meet ups supported by adopters, out and about at a midway meeting point. Three times a year for half a day, to start within three months of Arlo moving into adoption if all goes well. An earlier 'settling in' update by e-mail. They are happy to provide photos and information for Arlo's life story book and to record a video letter for later life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Meeting to draw up an agreement for keeping in touch. > Emotional support and check ins for all adults before and after meetings. > Help for Dell and Arlo's grandmother with costs and travel arrangements for meeting up. > Social worker will help with recording a letter for later life.
<p>Dylan and Roxy Informal meet ups arranged by adopters at a frequency that suits both families and meets the children's needs.</p>	<p>Adoption social worker will set up an initial meeting and provide any support needed to get these visits started and keep them going.</p>
<p>Rian Letterbox exchange through the mediated app once a year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Independent emotional support and referral to substance misuse and domestic violence services. > Help with writing letters.
<p>When and how will these plans be reviewed?</p>	<p>This plan will be reviewed as Arlo grows up in response to his changing circumstances, needs, feelings, verbally expressed views and responses to keeping in touch.</p> <p>Adopters are willing to meet Rian when she is ready for this, providing they are not at risk from her partner. They want to work towards a more trusting relationship between adults. With support, they are willing to consider face-to-face contact in future if this is safe and right for Arlo. It will be important that:</p>

- > Rian has begun to address her drug use AND
- > Is safe from violent partners or their associates AND
- > Is more able to accept Arlo's adoption AND
- > Rian is able to attend reliably.

The adopters would also like to meet Arlo's maternal grandparents if they feel able to do so in future. The plan will also be reviewed in response to changes in the circumstances, wishes and feelings of the other adults and their wider families. Support will be available for everyone involved from the post adoption support team.

research
in practice



Click [here](#) to view all of the *Staying in touch: Contact after adoption* resources.

An open access resource hub for practitioners working with individuals to maintain meaningful relationships after adoption.

Author: Polly Baynes, 2024



www.researchinpractice.org.uk



ask@researchinpractice.org.uk



[@researchIP](https://twitter.com/researchIP)

Part of the National Children's Bureau –
Registered charity No. 258825. Registered in
England and Wales No. 952717.

NCB RiP - Registered in England and Wales
No. 15336152.

Registered office: National Children's Bureau,
23 Mentmore Terrace, Hackney, London E8 3PN.
A Company Limited by Guarantee.

www.ncb.org.uk