

# Keeping in touch plan for Arlo Hopkins: adopters not yet 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 and family finding is ongoing.*

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.

<b>For Siblings/Cousins</b>	<b>Name: Dylan and Roxy</b>
	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Children/young people want to keep in touch – Dylan and Roxy are keen to meet their little brother.</li> <li>&gt; Visits can be activity based, chance to build up good memories.</li> </ul> <p><b>Family finding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; It will help if the two families live relatively close and if they have shared values and interests.</li> </ul>
<b>For Connected Adults</b>	
Factors relating to the child	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Arlo placed in infancy.</li> <li>&gt; Absence of major behavioural/mental health problems.</li> <li>&gt; Healthy psycho-social development.</li> <li>&gt; Arlo has not witnessed/does not imitate violence.</li> </ul>

Factors relating to the carers/adopters

### **Family finding**

Plans cannot be finalised until a family has been identified. We will be looking for adopters who are willing to support Arlo to keep in touch with his birth family. Research suggests this is most likely to succeed if they have the following qualities:

- > 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 his birth family.

These factors will be balanced with other considerations when matching Arlo, including the need to ensure his safety by finding a family outside of the area, and his religious and ethnic identity.

The local authority will involve the adopters in making keeping in touch plans, provide training, preparation and support.

## **Birth father and paternal grandmother**

Factors relating to Dell and Arlo’s grandmother

### **Strengths**

- > Has never been Arlo’s primary carer and was not involved in the abuse or neglect of Arlo.
- > 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.

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

### **Strengths**

- > Dell and Arlo's grandmother are willing to meet adopters and feel relieved that Arlo is going to be adopted out of the area where he will be safe and want him to have a family. There are good prospects for building trusting relationships with adopters.
- > 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 if positive adult relationships can develop.

## **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

- > Rian is not currently able to think about relinquishing her role as Arlo's mother. This can change over time.
- > Rian is not willing to meet up with adopters or hear any information about them.
- > Rian has threatened to get her friends to find out where Arlo lives.

### 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 – plans cannot be finalised until adopters have been identified and will change over time**

### Provisional Support Plan

#### 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.

Support will be available from supervising social worker and adoption social worker.

#### 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.

- > Supported introduction.
- > 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><b>Dylan and Roxy</b>          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><b>Rian</b>          Letterbox exchange through the mediated app once a year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Independent emotional support and referral to substance misuse and domestic violence services.</li> <li>&gt; Help with writing letters.</li> </ul>
<p><b>When and how will these plans be reviewed?</b></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>We will be looking for adopters who are realistic about current risks to Arlo and keeping him safe but also prepared to review plans for keeping in touch with Rian if her circumstances change. The most important changes are likely to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Addressing drug use</li> <li>&gt; Being safer from violent partners or their associates</li> <li>&gt; Being more able to accept adoption</li> </ul> <p>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.</p>

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.

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Author: Polly Baynes, 2024



[www.researchinpractice.org.uk](http://www.researchinpractice.org.uk)



[ask@researchinpractice.org.uk](mailto:ask@researchinpractice.org.uk)



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