



Life story work

with children and young people

A guide for adoptive parents

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Introduction

This booklet aims to clarify more about the nature of life story work and gives links, resources and ideas about how to approach the conversations that are an intrinsic part of life story work. The term 'Creating an Autobiography' may be a better term for adopters as this is not just a piece of work but a responsibility over childhood and part of the adoptive parenting role.

Ideas on how to structure life story work - if it is felt that a structure would be helpful - are in this booklet, and access to material about the subjects that often underpin the life story work is also provided. Finally, adoption support links and guidance on how Adopt London North may be helpful for all involved are highlighted.

What is life story work

Life story work is a term that is conventionally used to describe the collaborative process between a child and social worker. It will involve a finished product, typically a book, though the creation and consequences of life story work are of course far more wide reaching than the production of the book.

The purpose of the life story work is to share ideas, feelings and information that will create a real understanding in the child's mind of what adoption means, why they were removed from their birth family and finally why their adoption occurred. We hope that the majority of adopters will have a life story book to help them do this.

Children adopted

8% are under 12 months old when adopted

70% are age between one and four years old

Statista 2018

The majority of children will not have the opportunity before adoption, to have a full understanding of why adoption was necessary and why it would not have been safe to remain with birth family. For many children's social workers their task lies in the creation of the book for the child to be adopted as direct work with the child to achieve the aims of the book is not possible.

For Looked After Children (LAC) social workers with children old enough to comprehend what is happening, it is the communication about why an adoption is planned that is essential for the child's emotional well-being and future understanding of their situation. The book helps the process but is not the end of the process.

Sometimes adopters create their own unique book, also encompassing the child's time in the adoptive family. This will be touched on in the links that are provided here. Increasingly given the statistics on age at adoption, there is an expectation from social services that adopters will take on the responsibility of this raising of awareness of their initial background throughout a childhood with help if wanted from adoption support services after the adoption order.

The letterbox experience forms a vital part of bringing the life story alive in a household and most particularly for the child and there may well be changes in the birth family that will necessitate adjustments of the original story.

Where does a life story start

A life story for most of us starts where we choose it to start within the context of conversations with ourselves as well as others. We are all made up of many stories. It is the birth family story which can represent a gap for adopted people and it also represents one of the challenges of adoption.

A social worker will usually take the sandwich approach to writing a life story book (Joy Rees) starting in the present, going back to the birth history and coming back to the present with projections into the future. Do look at this video Joy has made about making life story books living documents for adopters and children [How to tackle Life story work by Joy Rees](#).

For an adoptive parent producing a book, they may want to start with the arrival of the child to the family and come back to the birth story (which is so important to children) at another point in the book. If the child is involved with producing a book they may have other ideas about order. We know that a sense of life story is not just about a book but a living process involving many mediums of expression.

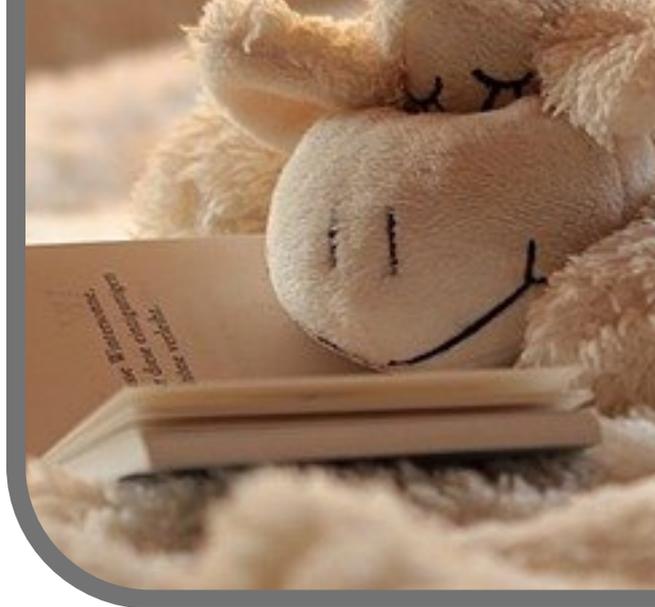
The most important conversation for adopters to have before launching off to other dialogues about life before joining your family, is the fact of adoption. This needs translation into the everyday language of a child and touches on what this might mean to their sense of self. It is important to be sure that from an early age, a child has a concrete explanation as to why they were not safe (if this was one of the reasons) to stay with their birth family. If done in a steady courageous way, potentially upsetting questions and conversations for adopters and their children, can be faced.

An atmosphere of openness and dialogue about adoption is then set. Much will be dependent on the story itself and the adopters and social worker's understanding of the birth family. If you have been in a position to meet with birth family this can be enormously helpful in making these conversations easier to have. A principle of any life story work is that it needs to come from a non-blaming wide angled approach, always stressing to a child the responsibilities that go with being a parent. The child who is adopted often feels that they must have failed in some way or done something wrong to be removed from their birth family, even whilst knowing this is not reasonable if they are old enough to reason. This is the crux of why it is so important that the child's experience of reading their life story book and talking about adoption with a social worker or parent can take place in a safe place emotionally. It offers the opportunity to adopters to address low self-esteem about events from the past with the child.



When is the right time to do life story work?

This document supports the idea that life story conversations and activities can be merged with doing something enjoyable and creative. We all know when we hear important news of any sort that it is how it is shared and the atmosphere of that moment that is vital in terms of its effect on us.



This document supports the idea that life story conversations and activities can be merged with doing something enjoyable and creative. We all know when we hear important news of any sort that it is how it is shared and the atmosphere of that moment that is vital in terms of its effect on us. For adopters, engaging with their child to make up to date contributions to their life story book about their present experiences can be a focussed and fun way for the child of taking some power back. The child is then no longer the passive receiver of hard to digest information but can become an active participant in their story. The book can also encompass their questions and feelings about the birth family. As a family you can decide when to do it if this means creating a document or covering something very specific but the overall message is it is something that naturally becomes part of everyday life. Therefore it is not a matter of 'when' but whenever your child or you find their history before arriving with you relevant to refer to. Life story conversations for children can be part of finding out and understanding more about themselves and the world around them. It is never too young to tell a child the fact of adoption even if they don't understand the word at first. Please see later links in the Guide for more about this.

When to tell a child about the reasons for their adoption of course comes after the fact of adoption is about their age and stage of development. It can be useful to reflect on what subjects the reasons link to, that may come up naturally in conversation. Health, addiction, lifestyle and the ability of birth parents to manage their emotions and circumstances of their lives are all reasons. You will be able to source more information about these conversations within this Guide. For a child where a disability is a key part of their identity, life story work can present an opportunity to strengthen their understanding of their disability and what is needed to make life easier for them. These conversations may then naturally lead to how previous adults in their lives may not have been able to understand and respond to their disability in a way that was right for them. This can in turn help them deepen their understanding of their journey through the care system to adoption. Think of it as a stream of conversation that can be picked up and left again. Confidence is then steadily built on for both parent and child



By the time your child is an adolescent, age 13, they need to be aware of the basics of the reasons that they came into care and were adopted as this is when the later life letter can get accessed which fleshes out the story from a social work perspective (see later section on this). Technology can have an important part to play in life story work with adolescents, for example, information found on line, 'Google Street View', going on line to listen to the songs that were popular when they were born, and perhaps making videos rather than books. The confidence to engage in this work comes more naturally from knowing your child and having an open mind and heart to experimenting with new and effective ways to deepen your bond and to communicate afresh on important issues in their lives which change from year to year.

Children need to make sense of their journey to adoption and to have the opportunity to ask their adoptive parents difficult questions in an atmosphere of safety and warmth. They need their parents to be honest about disquieting subjects. For thinking further about the sensory side of adoption in terms of what they may have missed if abused and neglected do look at <https://adaptability.wixsite.com/website>

How do children feel about life story work?

The word 'autobiography' gives the child the freedom to be part of the creation of something material such as a book. 'Life story work' is still a term that is very much associated with social workers and their tasks and duties.

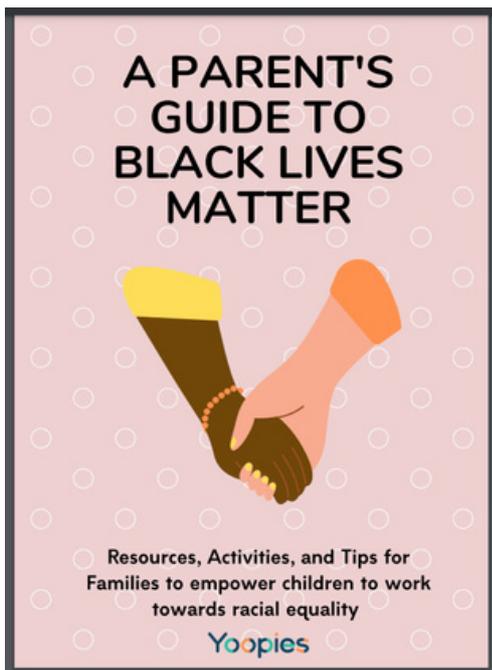
Many children once adopted find it more refreshing to use the word 'autobiography' which gives weight and respect to the part that the child plays in the creation of their life. It may also be an opportunity to showcase their talents and interests and share other stories about their life in its entirety. We are suggesting that many adopters might want to create their own book following on from the life story work with their children using the original book as a starting point.

How the child feels will depend on the timing, their history and their relationship with you and how you approach the integration of past and present. It can offer a chance to look at their present afresh and use the present to address areas where the child has questions or where confidence can be built. If for example your child has a disability which the birth parents could not manage or which resulted in many different carers this must be acknowledged and presented in such a way that shows the child it was not them that was lacking but others were not able to be sensitive to all their needs.

The concept of life story work offers a chance to explore what an adoptive family mean by culture within the family and how it differs from other families e.g. taste, likes and dislikes, food preferences, celebrations and other habits. This can lead to exploring what is meant by the wider culture that the child knows about outside of the family system. This may be eye opening and affirming for a child.

From this point it is important that life story work sets out to embrace the child's own culture and ethnicity by birth if they started in a different cultural setting to their adopters. This can increase a sense of wider belonging and pride in themselves. Adopters can think about how the child's autobiography can touch on music, religion, language, cuisine, and history of their country of origin or association as well as the history of the ethnic group within the United Kingdom. Flag design, skin colour and famous and talented people from the heritage of the child both in the present and historically can be incorporated providing opportunities of conveying positives directly to the child about this aspect of themselves.

Children who have been removed from their birth family and who are adopted by those of a different ethnicity or culture may become more out of touch with their beginnings. This may also be a factor if they have not had any contact with the birth parent who is of a different culture. Be mindful that children may internalise racism and be particularly reluctant to look at aspects of themselves that signify difference from the dominant culture. Adopters who are aware of these possibilities can integrate them into communication with their child. It is also important to consider how structural racism might have impacted your child in their birth family.



For all parents it is important to wend ideas about racial equality into communications about self and others.

A Parents Guide to Black Lives Matter - created by Yoopies (v3, 2020)

This booklet provides further ideas on this important area inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement. Topics raised may be relevant to their sense of their life story, and of their birth family's life story.

As a parent, how can I develop this sense of understanding of adoption in my child?

For an adoptive parent talking about and integrating their child's birth family into their life story can be part of everyday life. The child will already have a book even if made when they were a baby. Using and sharing this book is expected as part of the adoption experience, for the purpose of the book, like the work, is to reveal in a gentle but honest way why the birth parents were not able to care for the child. Good life story work incorporates the ability of the adopter to reflect and wonder about what might have gone on in the past before their child was placed with them. It incorporates the belief that it is possible that there was love, talent, appreciation and good times in the birth family as well as a grasp of all that was not right. Adopters need to develop the ability to deconstruct into language that is right for their child about what the factors might have been that contributed to their child coming into care. The social worker's words in the life story book will need further expansion from adopters as the child grows older.

As a parent you will have an insight on how to share/discuss/process the reasons why your child was adopted, whether in focused sessions or naturally as opportunities and conversations present themselves. Sometimes it can also be good to touch on imagined conversations the child might want to have where they express thoughts or ideas about their early life and parent and child 'wonder' together.

Life story work may involve acting out scenes and events with the child using miniatures [tiny objects that represent something of early life] or other toys or objects that can symbolise key events or people. These type of interactions feel possible for some adopters and not for others but the important thing is to allow spaces in daily life where such therapeutic communication can happen and within a secure atmosphere that contains love, play and creativity.

The challenge lies in how to convey to the child that the birth family is not a fixed entity incapable of change but also was a situation that wasn't good enough for the child at the time. Children's Services could not wait for them to change their situation enough for the child to be safe. Adopters can convey empathy, sadness, anger and regret for any suffering the child experienced from the birth family and through losing them. This can be a delicate area as these feelings need to be transmitted in a way that is supportive and does not leave a child frightened or overwhelmed by unprocessed adult feelings about birth family.

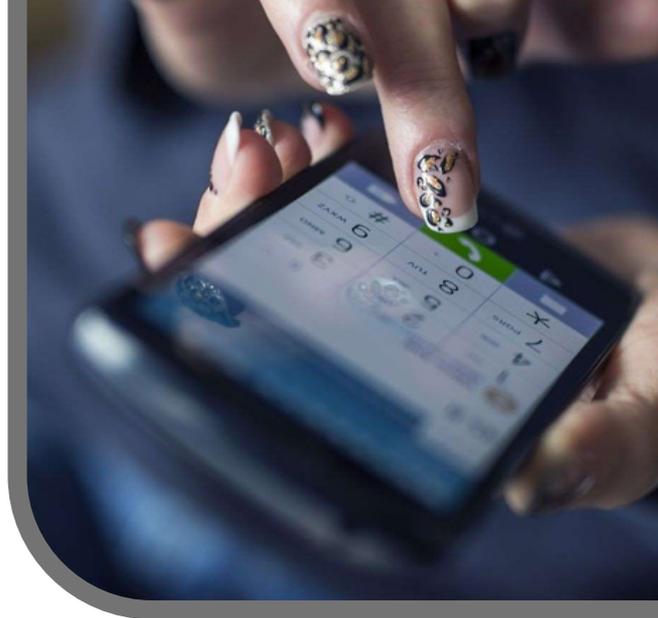
The problem with leaving life story work to chance and whim is that so often adults naturally and unconsciously avoid difficult conversations and there are many reasons for this. Sometimes the adults feels more uncomfortable about the story than the child who has lived through the experience of a change of family already, at a level that may not even be conscious. Talking about fertility can be a painful subject for adopters and also impact on how these conversations are approached. By not talking about the circumstances that have led to adoption the child can be left with a fragmented unexplored version of their early life and a sense that it makes others fearful or is too difficult for anyone to think about. Children can sense if they are not told the whole story and the anger and feeling of injustice that this arouses leaks out in many forms.

Contact and the Later Life Letter

Children feel that they don't know enough they are consequently more likely to try to find out for themselves via the internet to address the unanswered questions that surface. Letterbox contact plays a role in keeping the life story alive and grounding them in the reality of who their birth relations might be.

The later life letter which should reach every parent by the time of the adoption order is also a life story book but without the pictures and composed by the child's social worker who ideally has direct knowledge of birth family. Sharing the later life letter is part of the process as well and the advice is now that it can be shared from the age of 13 because of the risk of a child exploring contact through using social media with incomplete knowledge of risks the birth family may present.

Electronic developments are such that footage of a social worker reading the letter aloud to the child can be shared by the parents giving the letter a more personal feeling. The increasing availability of adoption support social workers can also be helpful to families who want their child to better understand the job of social workers and to explain how decisions were made. The later life letter and life story book should be with you at the very latest by statute ten days after the adoption order. Ideally this should be sooner so you have the opportunity to discuss it although it is for social worker's to decide what is written in it. As time passes, more use will be made of electronic versions of these forms but it is also important to get hard copies. Keeping a hard copy of the book within easy reach of the child is important even before they can read it for they will come to realise its significance in terms of their historical identity over time.



Some possible worries about the process of life story work



Life story work can offer the child or young person the chance to integrate their history, develop a more rounded sense of identity and can provide a great sense of relief, which can lead to a reduction in behavioural problems! Adoption research indicates that adopted children are very interested in their life stories but are aware of the divided loyalties that are sometimes set in motion for them in experiencing the reality of two sets of parents even when one set is largely out of sight.

Many adopted adults and children hold in mind a life that might have happened had they stayed with birth family and also the possibility of a future meeting with birth family. A sense of connection to two families is an inevitable consequence of adoption. This is likely to constantly evolve as will their understanding of adoption.

The worry of distressing information being disturbing is a real one that we do not downplay and this is where contributions from Adoption Support Social Workers and therapists can be very helpful at any stage for adopters.

Usually the issues for discussion is when and how to share aspects of the story rather than whether to share. Most adopted children are likely to gravitate towards the gaps in the narrative and the parts of their early life that do not make sense to them. Adoptive parents are crucial to how this is handled. How difficult information is shared and the atmosphere it is shared in are both integral to how it is received.

Adopters need to make a judgment call about timing and when their love and ability to make conversations therapeutic can shine. Only some may want to make use of a formal structure to share as is outlined in this document and we are keen to advise that there is no right way but we aim to provide helpful resources and ideas.

The key issue for many adopters is that the sharing of some factors of the child's history can feel like a burden and if they are not content with the quality of what they have this can become an obstacle to sharing at all or if there are too many unanswered questions. The fact the early life story comes from social services does not sit easily for some as it is partial and is likely to focus on the reasons for the child needing to come into care.

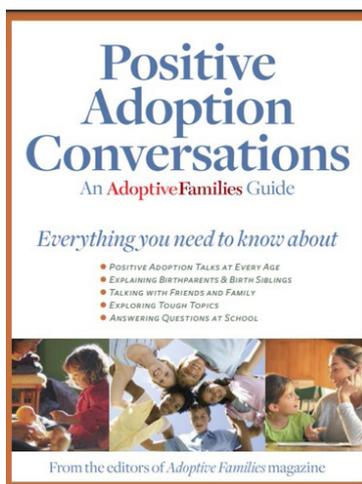
Children can feel that adopters may have played a part in their removal from birth family so for this reason some adoptive parents feel more comfortable with asking a therapeutic life story social worker to share parts of the history. The life story work often becomes a process that involves the child and the parent and the social worker working together.

This life story work can be enormously helpful in relieving the stress around the material and the story becoming clearer to the child in the presence of those they love. The ground underneath the child does not need to shake if the story is shared in a stable, warm and calm environment that is finely tuned to a child's needs. Understanding their story is a process throughout a childhood and will not happen in one go.



Adoption conversations

It is crucial that the life story work does not shy away from thinking with a child or young person about the reasons they came into care. Whilst this needs to be handled sensitively, it is generally a great relief to children to have their experiences acknowledged and to have help to understand them.



Positive Adoption Conversations

This is a guide created by the editors of Adoptive Families magazine, a US based organisation dedicated to adoptive parents

This excellent guide covers all the subjects it promises to. It has an accessible adopter-friendly style so it's worth reading and using the guide to support the conversations you have with your child.

There are other resources on a range of relevant topics to the child's birth history, and it is important the adults in the child's life have understood and read up on to prepare for the conversations that may take place. Please visit the websites and read some of the recommended books in the next chapter

Useful websites

The Life Story Hub provides guidance on how to talk with children about a range of difficulties their birth parents faced and explores what the different types of abuse might mean to a child. There are suggested phrases and ideas for having these type of conversations. See the adoption section of the Life Story Book Ideas for children.

www.lifestoryhub.com

The Tavistock Understanding Children's Lives provides ideas about challenging topics and how to share these with children and contains further useful resources.

www.understandingchildhood.net

The Good Reads website is good for linking any subject at all to reading matter. Hundreds of book suggestions are given to scroll through.

www.goodreads.com

Family Lives is a charity that helps parents deal with change. Their aim is to support parents to achieve the best relationship possible with the children they care about. Call their helpline on 0808 800 2222.

www.familylives.org.uk

Karen Treisman's website - Safe Hands Thinking Minds - is a rich tapestry of ideas for creative and positive communication with children.

www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk

Useful websites

Alcohol and alcoholism

The [Family Lives](#) link connects to a section on talking about alcohol.

An American site which explains about alcoholism

Death

[Winston's Wish](#) - A website that is full of resources and ideas in relation to grief, loss and children.

[Grief Encounter](#) - A website that supports children and young people who have been bereaved.

Domestic violence

[Esme.com](#) is a website that acknowledges that parenting can be hard and provides information, resources and connection.

Search the [Good Reads](#) website for links to stories that might be useful to talk about domestic violence and reflect on its impact.

Drugs

The [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children \(NSPCC\)](#) has a resourceful section on explaining drug use to children.

The [Royal College of Psychiatrists \(RCP\)](#) have an interesting website covering a range of subjects in relation to mental health. Free literature clearly explains mental health terminology and provides information about mental health difficulties.

Visit the [Good Reads website](#) for fictional reading material for children who have lived with an adult who has a mental illness.

Sexual abuse

The NSPCC has some useful resources for [engaging with children](#) about safety and what abuse is.

Books for adopters

Nurturing adoptions

Based on the North American adoption experience but adopters and the behaviour that challenges and how it relates to life stories

Deborah D Gray

Life books - Creating a treasure for the adopted child

Beth O'Malley

20 things adopted kids wish their adoptive parents knew

Sherrie Eldridge

Helping children to build self esteem: an activities book

Deborah Plummer

Communicating with vulnerable children

Joan Moore and Mary Corrigan

Telling the truth to your adopted child. Making sense of the past

Betsy Keifer

Life Story Work with children who are fostered or adopted.

Creative ideas and activities

Katie Wrench and Lesley Naylor

Bubble wrapped children

How social networking is transforming the face of 21st century adoption

Helen Oakwater

Life story books for adopted and fostered children

Second Edition: A Family Friendly Approach

Joy Rees.

A for Adoption

Alison Roy

Books for children

Hug

A chimp called Bobo in search of the right hug. Few words mainly pictorial.

Jez Alborough

Lost and Found

A tale of loneliness and friendship- few words mainly pictorial.

Oliver Jeffers

The Owl Babies

About a mummy who returns. Few words mainly pictorial.

Martin Waddell

I think I am

Brings the idea of positive thinking to young children.

Louise Hay

Badger's Parting Gifts

Loss - about a badger reaching the end of his life - and how he is thought about by those who love him.

Susan Varley

Goodbye Mog

Loss- about a celebration of a cat's life.

Judith Kerr

Sad Book

Looks at feelings of grief, anger and despair when someone dies.

Michael Rosen

Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine

Activity book for helping children when someone has died.

Winston Wish and Diana Crossley

Nothing

Looks at feeling alone and forgotten

Michael Inkpen

The playbook for kids about sex

Explains the facts of life in a light hearted cartoon style.

Joani Blank and illustrations by Marcia Quackenbush

Wild

A child who has been bought up in the forest and manages to keep this part of herself alive.

Emily Hughes

The Teazles' Baby Bunny

This book focuses on how children can be helped to heal and learn to feel at home and attach to new surroundings.

Susan Bagnall

A safe place for Rufus

A simple story and clear pictures provide a gentle introduction to the subject of adoption.

Jill Seeney

Interactive life story techniques

Use technology which the child will be familiar with – e.g. use the child's own laptop to search the internet for information about their birth country or to use 'Google Street View' of the country or town they grew up in.

It is important to use as many pictures as possible to bring the book to life whilst avoiding the fate of the book only serving as a photo album – you can use online maps to show the locations of previous homes, you can search for pictures online of significant places, such as the hospital where the child was born. It is important to use photos of the child from both their birth family (where possible) and their foster placements.

The [Day of Birth](#) website is a useful site about the child's day of birth which can help you provide useful information.

Life story work can also include activities which take place outside the child's home, for example, visiting previous foster placements, or visiting the area the child used to live using [Google Maps](#).



A possible structure with ideas for engaging in life story work

Further resource links are listed below. It is possible that adopters will want to create 'special time' of their own away from social workers to talk about the reasons for coming into care and birth family. This is what social workers commonly refer to as the child's life story work.

Adopters may use this time for a fresh creation of an autobiography - see the [Life Story Hub](#) website for autobiography ideas using the arts. The autobiography (life story book) that parents might create with or for their child can be linked to the original life story book and will seek to show the many strands of any individual story. The birth family part of the life story is by no means the only part of an adopted child's complex identity, which will contain so many stories. Adopters may find some of these structural thoughts helpful.

The order of life events in the social workers life story book is usually that the present is where the book begins, then to the past and a finishing with the present (Joy Rees, 2009). For the adoptive parent doing a fresh book with the child it may feel right to go with any order that the child wants. It could be subject lead; favourite holidays, hobbies, music, 'facts about me' or it could start with birth and lead to present, or start with present and back to birth then on to the future. Do what feels right for your child and see how they want to form it. A ring binder will allow you to play with the order and even have parts that the child might see as private to you and them. Equally the order can be played with an electronic version.

You may not want to do a book at all but engage in conversations instead. The key areas to cover are:

- the original family structure with names and physical descriptions of family members
- examples of why it was not safe for the child to remain with the birth family
- a picture of the birth family's struggles
- a time line/sequence of moves in the child's life is provided often using the seasons as a marker and their age is included at key transitions. This grounds the experience in chronological time
- reassurance if possible to give it of how the child was loved and cared for by birth family.
- Every attempt should be made by adopter and previously from the social worker to provide positive examples of loving actions from birth family whilst being true to the file records and not creating confusion about the need for the child to go into care.
- The child's life since these events needs to be integrated into the story

There are links throughout the material below to ideas about phrasing, telling and approaching the family story.

Individual session structure for life story work

Think about this as special time together that involves fun but is also a time when their life and your child's needs are being exclusively focused on by you. The original life story book could be near at hand for referring to as links might be made in the creation of the 'here and now' autobiography to the birth family and the reasons for adoption.

You will need to think about your child's ability to concentrate and their age. You may need to consider how information might be received, their phase of development and how this might impact on you share.

It is also helpful to think about:

- What information might have a beneficial effect on them and could actually settle them
- What questions they might be wondering about or are asking.
- What their behaviour might reveal about how they see themselves.
- What they might be wondering about
- How you might find out whether your hunches are correct.

Most of us have a tendency to fill in gaps in our knowledge with our imaginative projections. Adopted children too often believe they are somehow responsible for coming into care and blame themselves - details then come from their imagination and may have a tenuous connection or more often no link at all to the reality of the reasons for being adopted.

Remember that PACE - Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy as recommended by [Dan Hughes](#) in his You Tube video. Dan is a therapist who writes and talks passionately about using these qualities in conversations with children who may have insecure attachments.

For sessions with your child, you might need several short activities as moving between games and more focused activities could help keep the child interested. Life story sessions would typically last no more than 40 minutes with less time the younger the age of the child.

A general rule is as follows:

- Warm up games (approx. 10 minutes)
- Main body of the session (15/20 minutes) (This will need to be broken into different sections, particularly for children who struggle to concentrate, for example, you may need to move between something interactive such as working on the family tree and a game).
- Ending game (approx. 10 minutes)

Game Ideas

Snap, Dominoes, Jenga, Dobble, Sand and Sensory play, the Squiggle game, the Star or Circle tool, or whatever the child likes. Here is a site full of free resources for social workers but could be of interest to adopters and which addresses life story work challenges.

Session ideas

You will need to think how you are going to introduce the life story work to the child, and if you are a parent, what has already known been shared with the child. Do you feel happy with the knowledge you have and the particular topic you feel you need to explore further? Have you discussed it with those you respect and who you find supportive? Other adopters can be helpful to consult. Adoption support social workers may be helpful in linking adopters with those who may have similarities in the birth family story that they have shared with their child. Here is a suggestion of what could be covered over six sessions:

Session one

The Bear Feelings Cards are an excellent resource for parents and professionals in recognising the subtleties of many feeling states and enabling children to see and reflect on feelings without the use of words. Introducing the concept of doing 'autobiography' work with your child and see it as quality time together which will have much that is enjoyable and connecting about it too - be clear about what this time is going to attempt to cover and explore. Activity to explore the different feelings people can have. Ending game.

Session two

Start with a warm up game. Activity about babies and their needs – using pictures. Activities include, what the child is like now, for example; their age, height, school, likes/dislikes, bedroom, pets, and hobbies. Where the child is living. Ending game

Session three

Start with a warm up game. Activity about what the child was like when born, where they were born (including a photo of the hospital), how much they weighed, a copy of the birth certificate. Details about birth family – names, ages, ethnicity, occupations, religion, interests. Activity about the child's cultural or ethnic background, using maps, pictures. Ending game.

Session four

Start with a warm up game; why the child is in care – see 'Positive Adoption Conversations' on page xx, which includes links to resources that may connect to why the child was in care and adopted. The Kids Need Cards are excellent for exploring what children need to have a good start in life. Professionals or parents could use them. The judge's decision – this activity needs to explain when the court met, where and what the judge decided. Ending game.

Session five

Start with a warm up game. Activities about the child's time in care – this should include linking up the previous foster placements. A time line/life map to link all the aspects together and go over information/issues from session four. Ending game.

Session six

Start with a warm up game. Activities about the child's future, including their dreams and wishes for the future. Ending game.

There is a range of free templates from the Social Worker's Tool Box website that can help with the production and structure of a book.

Thoughts on the value of consultation for adopters

Life story work inevitably puts parents in contact with the child's often traumatic history as well as painful emotions in the present in myriad ways. Emotions such as anger, shame, disappointment and frustration are part of the picture.

Engaging with such feelings is an important part of exploring the story behind the adoption with the child and can actually increase bonds and empathic understanding of your child. Finding sources of support can help for reflecting on these feelings and ensuring that interactions about the past can remain focused on the child's needs.

For adopters we recognise that life story work is often a continuing process and part of bringing up an adopted child. However there are times when it is more or less pertinent in your life. We recognise this and are keen to offer you a chance to share your stories and experiences with other adopters through our regular training programmes as well as consultation sessions which are all from a trauma informed.

There are now monthly life story workshops run by adoption support social workers to give adopters who already have adoption orders the opportunity to discuss life story work. If you are interested in finding out more, please email [Natalie Salaman](mailto:Natalie.Salaman) who will contact you to discuss in more detail.

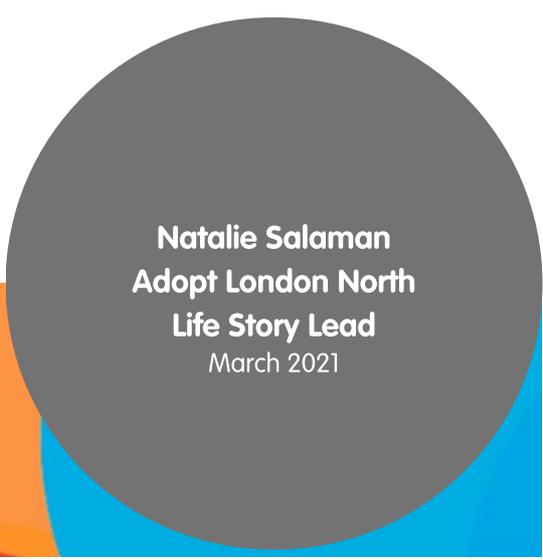
Adoption support social workers may be able to participate in the life story work you undertake if this is something you identify as helpful and whilst we have the Adoption Support Fund they can find you practitioners who specialise in doing therapeutic life story work who would expect to work closely with you and the child. This work needs a flexible and creative approach to adopters in relation to their unique circumstances and needs of their child.

The websites below are additional resources that are worth exploring and may be of great value in providing further ideas about the weaving of life stories into adopted children's lives.

[National Association of Therapeutic Parenting](#)

[We Are Family](#)

[Roots of Connection](#)



Natalie Salaman
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Life Story Lead
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