

# Open Adoption Fact sheet



Barnardos believe open adoption provides non-Aboriginal children who have been permanently removed from their birth parents care because of abuse and neglect with the same opportunities in life as the rest of the community.

## What is Open Adoption?

Open adoption is when an adopted child has on-going contact with their birth family. The frequency of this contact depends on the age of the child and their relationship with a member or members of their birth family. Contact includes face-to-face visits, letters, telephone calls, photos and cards.

## What does Open Adoption offer children in permanent foster care?

### Security and Permanency

Barnardos believe open adoption provides the only real security and permanency for a child who is unable to ever return home after being removed by the courts due to abuse or neglect. Open adoption gives these children the best opportunity for a secure future by finding a safe and stable family for life, not just until 18 years of age.

### Belonging

Open adoption gives a child a strong identity as an adopted full member of a family. Even after years of living with their family in permanent foster care, children tell of their huge relief when their adoption is finalised and they finally “belong.” Adopted children feel accepted in society due to their recognised legal status and do not experience the social discrimination and uncertainty felt by many foster children.

### Identity

Open adoption means there is no secrecy or uncertainty for the child surrounding their past because adoptive parents commit to maintaining contact with the child’s birth family. Understanding their past is to a child’s development and ongoing construction of identity as a member of an adoptive family.

### Better life outcomes and opportunities

Overall life outcomes for children who grow up in the out-of-home care system are poor both in Australia and internationally. Latest research shows the average number of placements for Australian children in out-of-home care is six (Barnardos specialized placement rates are many times lower). Research also shows a succession of placements causes major disruptions to childhood development with care leavers over-represented when it comes to unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse, early pregnancy, admission to mental health facilities and the juvenile justice system.