

**J, aged 17 reflects on her experience of post adoption direct contact with her older birth siblings (now in their 20's) who had remained in foster care at the time she was adopted.**

“At the age of 6 I was adopted into my forever family and I thought from that day onwards everything was going to be simple and straightforward but that was not the case.

From the time I was born until the time I was adopted it was just me, my sister and brother who were there for each other but we had our problems. It seemed to be a constant competition to be the best and to get the most attention and we shared some very distressing experiences but we stayed close and looked out for each other as best we could at a young age. We were separated when we went into foster care and had some difficulties when we got together.

When I moved in with my new family I knew I wouldn't get to see my brother and sister that much which made me sad but my Mum reassured me often that we would still see them. Looking back the reduced contact was for the best as our relationships with each other was difficult. We would see each other about once a year in a play area or somewhere fun but with the anticipation of waiting to meet and then seeing each other it was just too overwhelming and fights would start and my brother would inevitably break the gifts I had taken with me. We always reverted back to how we were before, competing and not really being very nice to each other. My Mum was always there and sometimes we left earlier because I would get upset. Even with these things happening it was always important for me to see them. I wanted to know what they looked like and that they were ok.

As I got older I thought things would change but instead they got worse and we ended up seeing each other separately in McDonald's where it was quick and any trouble was less likely to happen. My Mum still stayed but a social worker always came with one of my siblings. Eventually it wasn't possible to see one of my siblings who was very volatile. I made contact with them on Facebook which I thought might be a decent way of keeping in touch but it became quite hard to deal with and things were written that were quite abusive. On Facebook I didn't have my Mum whisking me away when it got too much and there was very little control over what was written on my timeline for everyone to see. I really didn't want that to happen and if I could start it all again I don't think I would have made contact on Facebook.

We each have our own lives to lead now and over the years we have grown apart and it has become obvious that we really can't have that normal type of family relationship. I'm glad we kept in touch but also glad the contact wasn't more frequent because we just wouldn't have managed it. I hope in the future when we have all matured that we can maybe establish some relationship and cope with being around each other.”