

CLAPA

Companions

Creating penpal connections for
young people born with a cleft

Guide for Young People



www.clapa.com



companions@clapa.com

Registered Charity in England and Wales (No. 1108160)
and Scotland (SC041034).



Introduction

CLAPA Companions is a penpal scheme connecting people born with a cleft aged 6 - 17 through letters, emails, videos and audio messages.


Contents

Good things about having a penpal	2
Who can have a penpal?	3
How it works	4
Your messages	5
What can't be shared	6
Ways to send a message	7
The technical bits	8
Talking points tips	9


Good things about having a penpal





It will connect you
with a new friend



Help you to feel more
positive about your
cleft journey



You can share experiences with your
penpal (these could be about your
cleft or something else)



Who can have a penpal?

Anyone who is...

- ✓ In the United Kingdom
- ✓ Aged 6-17
- ✓ Born with a cleft lip and/or palate



Tell us if English is not your first language. This won't stop you from having a penpal.



You don't have to write or type your messages.

You can send videos or voice notes if this would be better for you

How it works


1 Fill in our sign up form 

2 We will send you details of your penpal


3 Penpal A sends the first message to CLAPA 

4 CLAPA checks for unsafe content

5 CLAPA sends this message to Penpal B

6 Penpal B receives their message and replies via CLAPA 

7 You can message your penpal for up to 6 months

8 Both penpals decide if they would like to keep in touch outside of CLAPA 

9 If either penpal say no, then no contact details will be shared. If both say yes, CLAPA will share your penpals details with you so you can stay in touch

10 You are welcome to sign up to as many Penpal rounds as you like



Your messages



Do:

Be kind and polite in your messages

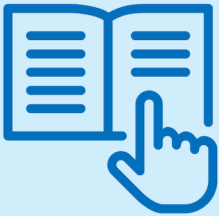
Share things about your cleft, your hobbies and interests



Don't:

Include personal details like your full name, your school or where you live

Use unkind language that might upset someone



Checking Messages

A CLAPA staff member or volunteer will read your message before it gets passed onto your penpal. This is to help keep everyone safe.







Keeping Everyone Safe

Your messages will be private between you, your penpal and the person checking the message.

If we are worried about your safety, the person checking your messages might share them with someone else at CLAPA who will decide what to do next.



What can't be shared

 What cannot be shared 	 What to say/send instead 
<p>Name of school or a picture of you showing your school logo on your uniform</p>	<p>Talk about your school generally without using the name</p>
<p>Where you live</p>	<p>You can talk about the cleft team who look after you or the nearest city to where you live</p>
<p>Your email address, phone number, gamer IDs or Instagram handle</p>	<p>If you stay in touch outside of CLAPA at the end of the project you might want to share these</p>
<p>Your last name</p>	<p>Just use your first name</p>
<p>Videos, photographs or text containing violent or sexual content</p>	<p>Remember to be kind and considerate in all messages that you send</p>
<p>Use in swear words and other language that might offend someone</p>	<p>Remember to be kind and considerate in all message that you send</p>

Ways to send a message

There are four ways to create a penpal message: it's completely up to each young person as to how they would like to create theirs. The options include:

Handwritten Letter



You can write a letter and post it to the CLAPA office, or scan it in and email it to us

Email or Digital Letter



Send your message by email, using Canva or another platform

Video Message



Create a video message or recording to say hi to your penpal

Audio Message



Send a voice recording or audio message, so you can chat to your penpal without being on camera

The Technical Bits



To send a message by email, please send to:
companions@clapa.com



To send a message by post, please send this to:

[CLAPA Companions, CLAPA, The Green House,
244-254 Cambridge Heath Road, LONDON, E2 9DA](#)



To send a large file, that's too big to attach to an email, such as a video, you can use one of these two free file-sharing services: [One Drive](#) or [We Transfer](#). Here's a [guide to using One Drive](#) and a [guide to using We Transfer](#).



Get in touch at companions@clapa.com if you need any help

Talking point tips

- How old you are
- What makes you, you
- Your favourite sports, games, music, YouTuber, TV show, animals, hobbies
- Somewhere you've been on holiday
- Your family, friends, pets
- What you do and don't like about school
- Something you've done that you're really proud of
- Something you've done that was scary
- Something you've done that was really fun
- Something you're looking forward to
- What you want to be when you're older
- A country you'd love to visit
- A celebrity you'd love to meet
- What type of cleft you were born with and how does it make you feel
- The best thing about you!