

Compassionate Engagement Template for Correspondence with Families

Below is a tone template, which may support communications in response to:

-  bereaved family member
-  serious concerns about care and organisational handling
-  high-volume correspondence

All of these instances have a need for **empathy, clarity, and containment without sounding defensive**. This could be utilised as a modular template, adjusting the sections according to the query being answered.

1. Opening: Acknowledge receipt and the emotional context

Always begin by recognising the difficulty of the situation and the emotional burden on the family. Keep it sincere, brief, and grounded. *Example:*

Dear [Name],

Thank you for your email. I am sorry for the continued distress that this situation is causing you and your family. I appreciate you taking the time to set out your concerns so clearly.

2. Recognise key points raised

Demonstrate that the message has been read carefully by reflecting back the themes, not verbatim.

Example:

You have raised concerns about the following:

[Insert the high level themes raised]

[Avoid reproducing contentious language directly]

Thank you for outlining these points. I want to reassure you that they have been noted and will be addressed through the appropriate process.

3. Provide a clear, factual update (if available)

If you can answer something directly, be concise. If you cannot, avoid sounding evasive; instead explain the route and expected timing. *Example:*

In relation to [topic]:

The current position is [brief factual update]. We will provide the next update by [specific date or timeframe].

If the answer must be deferred to a review or investigation, use calm, transparent wording. Example:

As this matter forms part of the ongoing review, it is important that the investigation team examines it fully. For transparency and consistency, it will be addressed through that process. I understand that waiting for these outcomes is difficult and I will ensure you are kept updated.

4. Express empathy without overpromising

Keep emotion proportionate, professional, and consistent. *Examples:*

I recognise how important it is for you to receive clear information.

I understand how upsetting these issues are for you and your family.

Thank you for your patience while we work through this carefully.

5. Manage expectations calmly and respectfully

This is essential when communication has become frequent or fragmented. Use language that contains without sounding dismissive. *Examples:*

To make sure we provide consistent and complete responses, I would be grateful if future correspondence about this matter is directed to [named individual]. This will help us avoid duplicate communication and ensure that you receive clear updates in one place. We will continue to ensure that your concerns are acknowledged and that you are updated in a timely manner.

6. Reassure about process and independence (where relevant)

Avoid defensive language. Keep it simple. *Examples:*

The review is being carried out by [independent body]. They will have full access to the information they need. We are committed to being open, to learning from the findings, and to keeping you informed as the work progresses.

7. Close with clarity, warmth, and professionalism

Avoid abrupt endings. Reinforce that correspondence is welcome but structured. *Example:*

If you have further questions that are not already addressed within the scope of the review, please include them when you write to [named contact], who will ensure they are collated and considered.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Kind regards,

[Name]

[Role]

[Organisation]

Optional Add-Ons for Specific Situations

When acknowledging delays: *Thank you for your patience regarding the delay in responding. I am sorry for any added frustration this may have caused. We are working to ensure that future updates are provided within the timeframes we set.*

When correcting inaccurate information: *Thank you for highlighting this. I am sorry for the confusion caused. The correct position is [brief correction], and we will ensure this is shared accurately going forward.*

When declining to provide certain information: *I appreciate your request. As this relates to personal information about another individual, we are not able to share those details. I hope you can understand the legal constraints we must follow.*

When acknowledging a bereavement in early stages: *I am very sorry for your loss. I recognise how difficult it must be to contact us during such a painful time.*