



Adoption in the public eye

David Holmes

I am writing this column just after National Adoption Week. I hope the week was a good one for agencies across the UK. We were pleased with the amount of positive media coverage of adoption during the week and delighted by the tremendous growth in social media coverage this year. We hope that this will result in an increased level of enquiries to agencies. BAAF was notified of 135 information events for the general public organised by adoption agencies under the NAW umbrella, so thank you to everyone who helped to organise these.

One of my highlights of NAW this year was attending a special adoption celebration held at the wonderful Transport Museum in Cultra in Northern Ireland. This huge event for over one hundred adopted children and their families was a stunning reminder of the power of adoption to transform lives. During NAW, we were also pleased to celebrate excellence in adoption practice at the first National Adoption Week awards. Congratulations to all the winners and finalists, who should be very proud of their achievements.

On the policy front, things remain very busy across the UK. In England, members will want to note that we have just seen the publication for pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft clauses to be included within the Children and Families Bill relating to ethnicity and foster to adopt. BAAF is concerned about the impact of the draft legislation as it is currently conceived and has welcomed the opportunity to comment on these clauses before the Bill is introduced into Parliament. Our initial thoughts back to Government will be published on the members' area of our website shortly.

Members in England will also be aware that the Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012 came into force on 1 September 2012 and introduced changes to the process for agreeing adoption as the plan for a child, which removed adoption panels from having a role in this decision-making process where the court is involved. We are aware that local authorities have been expressing views about the impact of these regulations on their service and the plans for children.

We have set up an electronic survey to gather these views and will use the results to give anonymised feedback on the experience of local authorities in implementing this legislation to the Department for Education, as part of the *Consultation on Adoption and Fostering: Tackling delay*. You can take the survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s/FMVKR9R; it closes on 30 November.

BAAF's child placement services are growing

Louise Hocking

BAAF offers a variety of child placement services, ranging from the long-established Be My Parent, which has placed children for over 30 years, to the recent addition of adoption activity days. The Adoption Activity Days Pilot Project has quickly demonstrated the impact on positive placement outcomes offered by this practice. Under the expert management of Bridget Betts, four adoption activity days have taken place so far, with a fifth planned for March 2013. The pilot project is being externally evaluated by Manchester Metropolitan University, although we can see that it is proving very successful. The research findings will be made widely available, with a practice guide planned for the future. To build on this success, Bridget will be the full-time, permanent manager of adoption activity days from April 2013 and we will be offering our services to work with agencies on running the days themselves. We are pleased to announce that Bridget is also a finalist in the Social Worker of the Year Awards in the category of innovative practice.

Be My Parent now has its highest ever number of children profiled online, with a third having accompanying video clips. To support video profiling, BMP recently developed a DVD, *Picture the Child: Filming children for family finding*. Copies are available free on request – contact bemyparent@baaf.org.uk.

We are currently undertaking a project entitled *Completing the Journey* to track the outcomes of children profiled in BMP (paper and web). We do currently track outcomes but sometimes struggle to get follow-up data and are keen to more accurately measure these. The project will also identify a number of children profiled in BMP and do follow-up work with the agency to support the profiling process.

Spreading the word with apps, awards and tweets!

Dan French

National Adoption Week 2012 in numbers:

- 12 groups of children featured in the national media via *The Sun* and *This Morning*.
- Over 600 pieces of press coverage.
- 3,505 tweets mentioning the campaign.
- 1 new app to help find families for children.
- 6 winners at the inaugural NAW Awards.

Fifteen children, including three sibling groups, were featured during the week in *The Sun* and *This Morning*, and attracted a number of enquiries. *This Morning* also featured the success story of Kean, a boy who was adopted after appearing on the programme during the 2010 campaign.

The 2012 NAW Awards, supported by 1E, were a great celebration of all things adoption and saw winners honoured across five categories. Wales-based Greg Shearman was named Adoption Champion of the Year; Christian Alibert, who ran the London and China Marathons for BAAF, was crowned Supporter of the Year; Adoption Social Worker of the Year went to Kathryn Kelly from Cheshire West and Chester; and Bournemouth Borough Council and Adoption Matters Northwest were awarded joint title of Adoption Service of the Year. Wendy Grant's heartwarming film took the award for Adoption Film of the Year – view it at www.nationaladoptionweek.org.uk/awards2012.



Kathryn Kelly receives her award from Children's Minister Edward Timpson

The Children's Minister, Edward Timpson, attended the ceremony and presented winners with their awards, and Prime Minister David Cameron praised the celebrations: *Congratulations to all the winners and nominees of these very special awards – the adoptive parents who have made a lifelong commitment to a vulnerable child, giving them a second chance to a happy family life, and the social workers for their hard work right across the adoption process, with the children*

Some of our Adoption Champions, l-r: Greg Edwards; Seyi and Shegun Olusanya and their son Josh; Greg Shearman; Karen McKellar and her daughter Angel; and Avril Head and her son Dominic

affected, the people waiting to adopt, and continuing support to the whole family after adoption.

We also launched BAAF's adoption and fostering app – the first of its kind – aimed at members of the public who may be considering extending their family. To find out more, visit www.baaf.org.uk.

As well as support from the Prime Minister and Children's Minister, celebrities including Rochelle Humes (*The Saturdays*) and Debbie and Lydia Bright (*The Only Way Is Essex*) joined us in helping to spread the word. Not to mention our 300+ Adoption Champions, who held various events across the UK, including a zumba night!

Thank you to everyone who helped raise awareness of adoption during the campaign – here's to National Adoption Week 2013!



National Adoption Week around the UK



Some of the intrepid walkers (and dogs!) tackle the Welsh coastline

Cymru: Best foot forward...

Whilst we have been encouraged that the number of children placed for adoption has increased over the last year, there remains a critical shortage of adopters in Wales. Armed with waterproofs, four- and two-legged companions of the BAAF Cymru team enjoyed two walks via the newly opened Welsh coastline to raise the profile of adoption. The Adoption Walk Wales Week was organised through a collaborative partnership with other voluntary sector organisations in Wales to celebrate NAW, and over 25 groups participated. We hope that this collective message will encourage prospective adopters to come forward and make that critical first step to becoming a new family for children who wait.

Northern Ireland: Family fun

NAW commenced with our annual celebration of adoption, which took place in the Ulster Transport Museum at Cultra, with over 100 adopted children and their families attending. The children explored a range of amazing exhibits including steam trains, trams and buses as well as relics from the Titanic. There was also face-painting, a magic show

and an opportunity for children to take part by saying a poem, sharing jokes and singing in front of a very appreciative audience. The event was great fun and reminded practitioners of the importance of our work in helping to create families.

On 11 November we held an open afternoon in BAAF's offices for members of the public to find out more about adoption. Over 60 people attended to hear the personal stories of five adopters. Two adopted young people also contributed, speaking movingly of how much being adopted meant to them.



Children have fun at the Transport Museum event

Scotland: Wishes for the future

BAAF Scotland was busy throughout the week. Along with members of the North East of Scotland Family Placement Consortium, we ran an information stand in Aberdeen's Trinity Shopping Centre. Busy shoppers, attracted by NAW balloons and stars, were given information about the need for adopters. The West of Scotland Family Placement Consortium hosted a stand in St Enoch's Centre in Glasgow, with staff available to answer queries, while visitors shared their experiences of adoption and



Aileen Campbell, Children's Minister, with the adoption "wishing tree" at our afternoon celebration event

fostering and added their wishes about the future of adoption to the "wishing tree".

Aileen Campbell, Children's Minister, introduced a motion into the Scottish Parliament highlighting NAW and BAAF's message to "Rule yourself in". She also joined representatives from member agencies for an afternoon of discussion. A presentation about the recent successful Adoption Exchange Days in Scotland was followed by a sneak preview of BAAF's upcoming recruitment film, produced in collaboration with the BBC.

This was a busy week for all and, yet again, a reminder of the need to keep adoption in the public eye. So many people who have potential as adopters rule themselves out when a short discussion could take them to the next stage. We are looking at ways to maximise the impact of our recruitment film to try to fulfil some of the many wishes shared with us.

Telling their stories

Miranda Davies

On 16 November, over 100 contributors and their friends, relatives and other supporters gathered at Goldsmiths College, University of London, to celebrate the publication of *Chosen*, an anthology of writings and poetry by adopted adults. Edited by Perlita Harris, this immensely moving collection features a wide range of voices from people aged in their late 20s to their late 70s, many of whom read from their work. Despite the variety of experiences and emotions conveyed, participants clearly identified with one another's stories – struggles with rejection, identity and the need for a sense of belonging were a common theme, even for the many who considered their adoption ultimately to have been successful.

A Q&A session prompted an interesting debate about why so few men contributed to the book and, indeed, why they tend to be less curious than women about searching for birth relatives and tracing their origins.

As journalist and author, Hannah Pool, writes in her foreword: *Chosen should be read by anyone whose life is touched by adoption. Whether you have an adopted son or daughter, niece or nephew, whether you are a social worker or a government minister, this book will give you crucial insights on the legacy of adoption.*

See the article *New from BAAF*, below, for details of how to order copies of the book.



Speakers at the *Chosen* launch event, including a number of contributors to the book



Andy Stott, Adoption Register Manager, delivered BAAF's sixth annual lecture at the AGM on 1 November, speaking about his eight years' experience of managing the Adoption Register and the current issues influencing family finding for children.

Recognising the exceptional contributions of the child care workforce

In the recent Queen's birthday honours list, 12 foster carers were recognised for their exceptional contributions to their communities. The Government would like to see more foster carers, as well as others working in the broader child care field, be recognised in this way for their contributions to helping vulnerable children.

Honours are awarded twice a year in the New Years' Honours and Queen's Birthday Honours, to people from all walks of life. Those awarded honours are exceptional people. Do you know someone who has made a significant difference, has demonstrated exemplary or selfless service, earned the respect of their peers or worked to improve the lives of looked after children?

A strong nomination will be widely supported by the organisation involved, the community or current or previous foster children. If the nomination is, say, for a foster carer, they may have been fostering for many years, have fostered many children or have fostered particularly challenging children, and will maintain contact with those they fostered. The nominee may be strongly involved with child care organisations, perhaps contributing to local policy development, delivering pre-approval training, helping to establish local associations, or supporting/mentoring others. Supporting testimonies from foster children (either current or previous), foster carers, birth parents or other workers in the field also strengthen nominations.

More information about the honours system can be found at www.gov.uk/nominate-honour. The nomination form can be downloaded from www.gov.uk/nominate-honour/nominate-someone. Examples of foster carers who have been awarded honours can be found at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/queens-birthday-honours-foster-carers-honoured.

Treats and trials to raise money for BAAF!

Sophie Fanning-Tichborne



Carly Lovejoy dares the firewalk!

We are very pleased to announce BAAF's second Firewalk! On the night of 24 January 2013, you can try the ultimate challenge by walking across fire at London's famous Spitalfields market! In March this year, 30 walkers took part and raised an amazing £6,500, and we hope to beat that total this time. All agreed it was an exhilarating and fun evening. Training is given by Firewalk UK on the night and you only need to raise £150! Could you take that extra step to help children in care? For more information, please email fundraising@baaf.org.uk, call Sophie on 020 7421 2636 or visit www.baaf.org.uk/fundraise/sponsors/firewalk to register. Firewalk UK have led thousands of people across fire and have an outstanding safety record.

SPARKLE AND SPICE WITH ANDREW BARTON

Join us for an exclusive evening with celebrity hairdresser Andrew Barton! Get ready for the festive party season with a personal hair consultation and more, whilst enjoying champagne and nibbles at Andrew Barton's stylish central London salon. Andrew is a BAAF Patron and TV's favourite hairdresser. He and his award-winning team transform everyday hair

into luscious locks with their expert knowledge and skills. Tickets are just £25 and include a goody bag. You can also enter the raffle and have a chance to win the top prize of a cut and colour with Andrew – worth £350! Tickets are limited – don't miss out. Book online at www.baaf.org.uk/fundraise or call the Fundraising team on 020 7421 2630/6.

Conference explores developments in public children law

Kay Mirza

Adoption and child care have been high on the Government's policy agenda in recent months. This has resulted in changes to Regulations, Guidance and policies and the expected introduction of a Children and Families Bill to Parliament. At the same time, implementation of recommendations from the Family Justice Review is having an impact on the practice of courts and local authorities in this area.

A BAAF conference, entitled 'Developments in public children law: the changing law of child care and placement', will be held on 6 March 2013 in London. It will aim to draw together the recent and proposed changes and to explore how local authorities, voluntary agencies and legal and social work practitioners can meet the challenges posed by the pressure to provide a faster, more efficient and effective service to children who need to be separated from their birth parents.

For more information or to book, visit www.baaf.org.uk/training/conferences or contact the BAAF Conference team at conferences@baaf.org.uk or on 020 7421 2636/7.

NI Exchange Day champions children

Sarah Johnston

BAAF Northern Ireland/ARIS (Adoption Regional Information System for Northern Ireland) hosted our second Exchange Day in Belfast on 9 October. Seven children were featured, at least one from each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts across Northern Ireland, and over 40 prospective adopters attended. All of the children received some expression of interest from adopters on the night, and some of them were inundated with interest! Five weeks on, social workers for six of the children are still exploring potential placements and we are optimistic that all of them will be placed.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and numerous people commented on the relaxed and friendly atmosphere. A prospective adopter said, 'An excellent event, very informative and thought-provoking. It was great to be able to hear first-hand from the children's foster carers and social workers and really encouraging how people were championing the children.' A social worker commented, 'We are delighted with the response we received. The whole experience for us as profilers, and for the adopters, was very comfortable. I will certainly urge the profiling of other children from this Trust.'

We are delighted with the success of the Exchange Day and are already looking forward to the next, in March next year!



Information about one of the featured children at the Exchange Day

New from BAAF

Moving Pictures

Hedi Argent

Children who cannot live with their birth families will often have had a number of moves during their lives, even before they are placed for adoption or permanent foster care. These children will probably have been introduced to ideas of "forever families", but change can still trigger uncertainty. How can they learn to trust that they will remain safe in a new permanent home?

Moving Pictures will help children to explore the ideas of moving and permanence. A CD-ROM contains black and white drawings that can be printed out for children to colour in, designed to spark discussion of the child's thoughts, wishes and hopes around the idea of moving to a new family. The accompanying book provides guidelines, advice and suggested questions for the practitioner or carer working with the child.

Designed for social workers and carers undertaking direct work with children aged four and above, *Moving Pictures* is an essential tool to help children and adults enjoy an activity together, while tackling difficult and possibly painful topics.

£9.95 plus £2 postage + packing

Chosen: Living with adoption

Perlita Harris (ed)

Chosen brings together essays and poetry by around 50 adopted adults born between 1934 and 1984. Some are established

writers, others are new and emerging, while some have never been published before. They capture a broad range of perspectives on subjects including adoption within the extended family; late discovery adopted adults; transracial and transnational adoption; and those who have searched for birth family, and those who did not search but were found by a relative.

We learn about the variety of ways these writers have found to live, and sometimes struggle, with adoption, and how some embrace it not only today but also in the next generation. The themes of identity and belonging, loss and grief, roots and searching, family and "post-reunion" relationships permeate these accounts, as does the power of acceptance, healing, and taking responsibility for the direction one's life takes, whatever one's beginnings.

£14.95 plus £4 postage + packing



To order the above titles, visit www.baaf.org.uk or contact BAAF Publications on 020 7421 2604

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Staff News

Goodbye to

Jane Greenstock, Membership Assistant, Head Office

Caitlin O'Neill, Administrator, Development Team, Head Office

A warm welcome to

Anna Aderibigbe, Publications Administrator, Head Office

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Holly Gordon, Trainer Consultant, Rhyll

Megan Harrison, Editorial Production Officer, BMP, Head Office

Edmund Jayasuriya, Marketing Manager, Head Office

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Louise Ridley, Trainer Consultant, Central England