

Meeting summary

8 March 2024 | 9.30am - 12.00pm

1. Updated Adoption Support Plans

- 1.1 Elaine Dibben joined to talk about the new Adoption Support Plan and the template she has been working on with CoramBAAF. Adoption England have had input. The ASP includes guidance for social workers on how to write the plan and guides for adopters and IROs. The form will be piloted by four Regional Adoption Agencies over a six-month period; to be completed by October 2024. It will also be shared with Adoption UK (who will be taking it to some of their focus groups of adopters) plus CoramBAAF's Advisory Committees. Some open training sessions will support the launch of the form and its use will be incorporated into other CoramBAAF training e.g. Panel Chairs, ADM, etc. Members generally liked the form and felt it was easier to use. It was however felt to be quite long.

Action: to discuss feedback of the form at the next meeting from piloting agencies.

2. Feedback from joint Chairs & Advisers meetings in November

- 2.1 It was agreed that having a joint meeting with Panel Advisers disrupts the flow of meetings and leaves a big gap between meetings. There was a discussion at the recent Panel Advisers meeting about whether the group would like to continue to attend the joint meeting or have another Panel Advisers meeting in the Autumn instead. The consensus was that Adoption Panel Advisers would prefer to have another Panel Advisers meeting plus join the Adoption Panel Chairs for the last part of the Chairs meeting. The group discussed and a number of people felt it was important that Panel Advisers joined the meeting. It was suggested there be a particular focus/topic to discuss at the joint meeting. There was also a suggestion of holding a one-day conference.

Action: CoramBAAF to explore the possibility of a one-day Panel Chair conference with Panel Advisers – possibly early Spring next years.

Action: Adoption Panel Advisers to join part of the annual joint meeting.

- 2.2 CoramBAAF and Fostering Network held a joint meeting for Fostering Panel Advisers and Fostering Panel Chairs for the first time in 2023.

3. Returning Face-to-Face

- 3.1 Most panels are now held virtually with face-to-face training days. Holding remotely can help with increasing the diversity on panels as the net can be cast wider. Panel members do not have to incur travel expenses and child care costs nor spend time travelling. However, these benefits need to be balanced against the loss of direct interaction and relationship building that meeting in person can provide. This can be particularly difficult for new members.

Action: Panel training on matching in early permanence to be added to next agenda.

4. Ofsted

- 4.1 A number of agencies gave feedback on recent Ofsted inspections. Ofsted are carrying out thematic inspections in a number of RAAs as part of a pilot. They have done six so far and will publish a report in the next couple of months.

5. CoramBAAF Updates

- 5.1 CPR update – the feedback has generally been positive. The pilot will start in May and is anticipated to take around six months. Feedback will be sought front line social workers to RAA staff, Panel Advisers, Panel Chairs and Agency Decision Makers. The Department for Education, Ofsted and the judiciary will also be consulted.
- 5.2 Alexandra Conroy-Harris, Legal Consultant and Jane have made a number of visits to the Judicial College in Daventry talking about early permanence. Issues about court practices have been raised at CoramBAAF's new ADM sessions. A new schedule for Judicial College training is being released in April and there is potentially a plan for CoramBAAF to talk to them about 'Staying in Touch'.
- 5.3 Alexandra Conroy Harris and Jane have run 16 workshops for ADMs commissioned by Adoption England/RAAs. Another five will run this year, two in the North and three in the South. ADMs that have not attended can book via their RAA/Adoption England.
- 5.4 As a result of a requests by ADMs, CoramBAAF has set up a [bi-monthly surgery for ADMs](#) on the third Thursday of the month. This is a peer to peer discussion/reflection session for ADMs primarily aimed at decisions for children but also those making decisions for approval of adopters. Alexandra Conroy-Harris attended the last session. CoramBAAF's Health Consultant plus a rep from the IRM will attend a future sessions.
- 5.5 CoramBAAF have been commissioned to produce a series of materials for ADMs: Practice notes on 'CPRs for ADMs' and 'Agency Decision Making in Adoption'. Alexandra is writing one on 'Use of Part 19's Early Permanence' and 'Consideration of Brothers and Sisters in making those decisions'. 15 minute training clips will also be available. The videos should be available in April and the CPR materials in May through both Adoption England's and CoramBAAF's websites. CoramBAAF is producing a good practice guide for Agency Decision Making, to be published towards the end of the year.
- 5.6 Jane is doing a piece of work on case holding research in conjunction with Coram-i on behalf of Adoption England looking at the transition of cases from LA to the RAA. Some take responsibility for the child's case from the point of placement order, some at the point of matching, some not at all. Jane is exploring if this has a difference both in terms of quality of paperwork, quality of documents and case recording but also timescales for children. A report is due to be published in May.

6. Issues from the policy and practice briefing

- 6.1 Jane confirmed that the PAR will be updated in 2025, after the CPR. Jane is happy to receive any comments on the PAR.

7. Any other Business

- 7.1 **SSAFA Adoption Service** – It was acknowledged that the adoption service is closing down; their last panel meeting had been held this week.
- 7.2 [EurAdopt Conference, 17 and 18 April, Cambridge](#) – Jan reminded the forum about this event.
- 7.3 **The Archives and Records Association (ARA)** – has published the findings of the research phase of a project led by the Chief Archivists in Local Government Group (CALGG) of the ARA to identify where the records of adopted and care-experienced people are held in England and Wales, and to generate guidance on the preservation of these records. Further details about the project, and links to a full and summary versions of the report, are provided on the [ARA website](#).
- 7.4 **Staying in Touch training** – please find further information [here](#).

Future agenda items

- Matching in early permanence (Jane to adapt her Panel training)
- Sharing problems and challenges of virtual panels
- Feedback on the Adoption Support Plan form from piloting agencies

Date of next meeting: 28 June 2024 (changed from 5 July)