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adoption • fostering • kinship

Minutes

Fostering Advisory Committee

10 March 2026 | 10am – 12.30pm

Present

Jenny Alexander-Brown	Foster carer, Nottingham	JAB
Hanan Al-Najjar	Foster carer, Waltham Forest	HAN (chair)
Florence Chiwetu	BMEPAC rep	FC
Rachel Cole	Black Foster Carers Alliance	RC
Cara Jones	Foster carer, IFA	CJ
Julie Macer-Wright	Essex	JMW
Heather Moonlight	AFKA Scotland	HM
Claire Rogers	Tree House Care	CR
Steffi Roth	Brighter Futures for Children	SR
Liz Spaven	Newcastle	LS
Nicola Smith	Barnardo's	NS
Matt Taylor-Roberts	Proud 2B Parents	MTR
Ruth Willetts	Foster Talk	RW

In attendance

Georgina Coope	CoramBAAF	GC
Emma Fincham	CoramBAAF	EF

Apologies

Linda Briheim-Crookall	Coram Voice	LBC
Angie Gillies	AFKA Scotland	AG
Sarah Thomas	The Fostering Network	ST

1. Welcome, introductions and matters arising

1.1 HAN opened the meeting as chair and attendees introduced themselves.

1.2 Minutes of the last meeting were accepted as accurate.

2. Equality, diversity and inclusion

2.1 The next Black Care Experience Conference is on 28th March in Manchester. EF and HAN highly recommend attending if members can.

2.2 Foster Talk are publishing a practice note on assessing polyamorous families, which is in the final stages of development. This is to increase assessor awareness and confidence to prevent applications being shut down early.

RW to share with the committee when published.

2.3 It is currently the Islamic month of Ramadan, where the final 10 nights are the holiest time of the year for Muslims. HAN encouraged agencies to be mindful that Muslim children and foster carers may be less available for meetings or other appointments at this time and encouraged social workers to check in with their families' wellbeing at the end of this period.

3. Reforms consultation

3.1 EF gave an overview of the DfE reforms consultation, launched on 3 February, and some key changes it proposed. The deadline for responding is 17 March. CoramBAAF are submitting two responses; one from the Foster Carers Advisory Committee and one on behalf of other members. Views from all advisory committees and practice forums are being collated to inform the latter. Areas to respond to are:

- Allegations
- Panels
- National register
- Fostering limit
- DBS and vetting
- Financial Transparency
- Kinship
- Innovation

3.2 For each of these topics, GC shared a virtual poll for members to record their views. Results showed that:

- 70% of attendees agreed the proposed changes to allegation standards and guidance would provide greater support to children and carers experiencing an allegation
- 89% of attendees agreed the proposed changes to allegation standards and guidance would make the process fairer and more transparent
- 83% of attendees were not in favour or removing panels from the initial assessment or first annual review processes
- 54% of attendees were in favour of a national register for foster carers (further details pending), with 31% undecided or indifferent
- 20% of attendees were in favour of removing the statutory three child limit and instead relying on case-by-case social worker judgement.
- 40% of attendees were in favour of retaining the statutory three child limit, with another 40% wanting to allow exemptions on a carer specific basis.
- There were mixed opinions on how well DBS filtering rules were understood by assessing social workers and children's services
- There were mixed opinions on how confident assessing social workers and children's services were in using information provided through DBS disclosures to inform their decisions when assessing prospective carers

3.3 Overall, members were against the removal of panels due to:

- Loss of independent scrutiny
- Reduced safeguarding
- Reduced opportunity for diversity
- Loss of lived experience

  However, it was acknowledged that improvements could be made.

3.4 There were some data protection concerns regarding the national register, but the response to this idea was mostly positive.

3.5 Although advertising fees as an incentive was questionable, it was recognised that foster carers 'doing it for love' still have bills to pay. Caring for children is expensive and the majority of fees and allowances goes towards them.

3.6 Regarding innovation, members agreed it was very difficult for new ideas to be approved. It was felt that Weekenders would not solve the sufficiency crisis, but its protentional for introducing younger people to fostering was promising.

3.7 LS provided feedback from the regional hub in Newcastle, noting the differences in marketing and social media activity as well as funding.

3.8 A general feeling of reforms fatigue and skepticism was expressed by the committee, but members will continue encouraging their networks to submit responses.

Date of next meeting: 14 July 2026, 11am – 3.30pm, London