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Minutes

Foster Carers Advisory Committee

29 April 2026 | 10am – 12.30pm

Chairs: Steven O'Reilly and Cara Jones

Present

Jenny Alexander-Brown	Nottingham	JAB
Paul Calder	Kent	PC
Cara Jones	Chrysalis Consortium	CJ
Nicky Lockett	West Midlands	NL
Steven O'Reilly	TACT	SOR
Melanie Stubbs	Shropshire	MS

In attendance

Rebecca Blunn	Foster with West London	RB
Georgina Coope	CoramBAAF	GC
Emma Fincham	CoramBAAF	EF
Amanda Nelmes	Coram Leap	AN
Niketa Sanderson-Gillard	Why Care	NSG
Cecillia Tan	Waltham Forest	CT

Apologies

Hanan Al-Najjar	Waltham Forest	HAN
Adam Dalal	Blackburn with Darwen BC	AD
Nazeema Gill	Homefinding Fostering Agency	NG
Rebecca Pacy	Time Out, Sussex	RP
Lisa Little	Hull	LL
Jennifer Roy	Haringey	JR
Fiona Trewartha	East Riding, Yorkshire	FT
Shada Panjabi	Waltham Forest	SP
Alastair Scott-McKinley	West Region, Northern Ireland	ASM

1. Members good news stories and CoramBAAF update

1.1 SOR welcomed members to the meeting and invited them to share any achievements and successes. These included:

- Praise for social worker support of young people's activities
- Young person moving to a more appropriate school
- Visible benefits of young person's therapy

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- Carers feeling less vulnerable and more triumphant, with lots of “little battles” being won (e.g. advocating for the child they are caring for)
- EHCPs obtained
- Young people educational and extracurricular successes
- Positive child health developments

1.2 CoramBAAF update from EF:

- Two consultation responses have been submitted regarding fostering reforms; one from this committee and another on behalf of all CoramBAAF members. Overall, members objected strongly to the removal of panels in particular, whilst acknowledging that improvements could be made. A joint letter was published to emphasise this view.
- New national minimum standards are currently being drafted, led by Niketa Sanderson-Gillard
- Regionalisation (Hubs and Regional Care Co-operatives) developments are in progress and at different stages according to region and configuration. Many Hubs are working towards the End-to-End model. CoramBAAF intend to remain in close contact with DfE throughout this process, and keep advisory committees involved where possible.
- Work is underway to roll out the new Form F in Wales and Northern Ireland. CoramBAAF are working with AFKA Cymru and (NI) to make the necessary legal amendments, ready for publication later this year. Early work has also begun with AFKA Scotland.
- A draft Form T for transferring foster carers is in progress in collaboration with The Fostering Network. This removes the need for another Form F, with emphasis placed on centralising safeguarding and ease of portability.

2. Equality, diversity and inclusion

2.1 The Black Care Experience Conference took place in Manchester on 28th March. CJ and HAN reflected on the day and shared key takeaways, including:

- The issue of adultification of young black girls and how they are both overly sexualised and given responsibilities beyond their age
- The greater likelihood of care experienced people being homeless, and of black care experienced people ending up in prison or gangs
- How agencies are supporting children to change their endgame/ life chances and outcomes

2.2 *Disability and family time*: Members questioned whether work was being done to make family time more accessible for children with physical disabilities and complex medical needs. It was noted that these sessions are often more difficult to organise and facilitate, with many facilities being unsuitable.

Action: JAB and MS to prepare a presentation and discussion item for the next meeting.

3. End-to-End recruitment, approval and support model

3.1 Rebecca Blunn and Cecillia Tan spoke about the Foster West London Regional Recruitment and Retention Hub. RB summarised the hub context and function, then invited member input and questions.

3.2 Concerns raised by foster carers were:

- Lack of IFA involvement in Hubs/RCCs

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- IFAs feeling cut off with no sense of community and this causing competition, when the system needs IFAs to function
- Connections to social workers being lost in the new system, and losing links to assessors once handed back to the local authority
- Potential increase in online vs. in person activity by going regional, with personal connections being lost and online training/meetings being less effective (easier to zone out/multitask with other work). Some geographical areas may be huge and rural locations have their own struggles with accessing support/ services/ training etc.
- Loss of peer support for foster carers
- Foster carer travel restrictions
- Foster carers all needing access to the same training (content and quality) with advanced notice.
- Local authorities vary hugely in practice, as highlighted by regional networking, with inconsistency creating animosity

Action: RB and CT to share slides and follow-up questions with GC for circulation to the wider group.

4. Fostering Standards

4.1 DfE are redrafting the national minimum standards, led by NSG. NSG and EF introduced the subject and asked members to share their thoughts on the current NMS.

4.2 Comments on the current NMS related to:

- Too open to interpretation leading to very different experiences for foster carers
- Can be used as a 'stick to beat' foster carers with
- Language and professionalism – scope for developments in practice
- Research and evidence-based training, providing practical fostering skills – scope for training to be improved
- Supporting vs. supervising family time and conflicts of interest

Action: Niketa to return to this group once more progress has been made.

5. Violent behaviours in the fostering household

A recent poll showed only one member of the committee had no experience of threats and/or violence in the foster home. Everyone else has experienced either violence towards themselves, other family members, damage to the home and belongings and/or verbal threats. Concerns have been repeatedly raised by this group that there is no procedure or standardised support for foster carer injuries. Additionally, foster carers are explicitly advised on occasion to not involve the police to avoid criminalising the child, which can leave households feeling vulnerable and unsafe. Training and guidance on this subject tend to be ineffectual and inconsistent.

5.1 AN shared some background on Coram Leap and their current remit, including Fostering Connections and the Under Our Roof hub. All work is trauma informed and shaped by young people's voices.

5.2 Foster carers shared some experiences of violence in their home. They reflected on how this was responded to by fostering services and the overall feeling that nobody cared about their wellbeing. Members acknowledged how their capacity to be empathetic and trauma aware did not negate the negative impact of a child's behaviour, be that physical, mental or practical. The

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value of social workers checking in with foster carers to ask how they are doing was emphasised. It was also recognised that having other children in the home made these situations more difficult, where carers were unable to keep all children safe or be honest on record about what was happening. Limitations on physical restraint can also prevent carers from protecting themselves or the children. (N.B. physical restraint should only be a last resort, techniques require specialist training, incidents need to be fully recorded – including the child's version and opportunities for safe and supportive debriefs and lessons learnt discussions.)

5.3 AN suggested the creation of a listening space could be helpful, where foster carers could feel heard. Members were invited to share ideas for short-term solutions, with recognition that changes to policy and practice take time.

Suggestions were:

- An incident report where foster carers can record incidents accurately and fostering services can record their response; not to blame the child but for future planning, descalation strategies that work aiming for prevention.
- Children/ young person supported to record their account – age and stage appropriate.
- Stricter accountability regarding follow-up actions and an online system where reports can be collated and analysed to identify patterns (similar to Datix in the NHS).
- Standardised incident frameworks across all fostering services, for foster carer equality.
- Mandatory training for all foster carers on how to deal with violence

Action: AN to send follow-up questions to the wider group for response. EF and AN to keep conversations going with this committee and identify feasible solutions.

Date of next meeting: 1 July 2026

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