

# Minutes

**01 July 2026 | 10am – 12.30pm**

*Chairs: Steven O'Reilly and Cara Jones*

## Present

|                       |                              |     |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----|
| Jenny Alexander-Brown | Nottingham                   | JAB |
| Hanan Al-Najjar       | Waltham Forest               | HAN |
| Nazeema Gill          | Homefinding Fostering Agency | NG  |
| Cara Jones            | Chrysalis Consortium         | CJ  |
| Nicky Lockett         | West Midlands                | NL  |
| Elrose Lindsay        | Willenhall                   | EL  |
| Steven O'Reilly       | TACT                         | SOR |
| Rebecca Pacy          | Time Out, Sussex             | RP  |
| Shada Panjabi         | Waltham Forest               | SP  |
| Melanie Stubbs        | Shropshire                   | MS  |
| Fiona Trewartha       | East Riding, Yorkshire       | FT  |

## In attendance

|                |           |    |
|----------------|-----------|----|
| Georgina Coope | CoramBAAF | GC |
| Emma Fincham   | CoramBAAF | EF |

## Apologies

|                         |                               |     |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|
| Paul Calder             | Kent                          | PC  |
| Adam Dalal              | Blackburn with Darwen BC      | AD  |
| Jennifer Roy            | Haringey                      | JR  |
| Alastair Scott-McKinley | West Region, Northern Ireland | ASM |

## 1. Welcome and member updates

**1.1** SOR welcomed members to the meeting and invited them to share any good news stories. Achievements included:

- Young people graduating from university and school
- Educational achievements, including a chess championship win and successful SEND appeals
- Positive transitions, including adoption and Staying Put arrangements moving into independence
- Successful reunification with birth family and ongoing relationships
- Children and young people achieving personal goals and overcoming anxieties

## 2. Equality, diversity and inclusion

- 2.1 EF introduced discussion on Pride Month and concerns regarding a perceived reduction in visible support for LGBTQ+ communities across some fostering services and local authorities.
- 2.2 Members discussed reports of local authorities reducing or withdrawing EDI-related activity and reflected on the potential impact on children, foster carers and the wider workforce. Concern was expressed around:
- Racism, homophobia, transphobia and misogyny being increasingly evident within communities and schools
  - The impact of online content and social media on children and young people
  - The need to actively support children's identities and challenge discriminatory attitudes
  - The importance of foster carers feeling confident to address difficult conversations around equality and inclusion
- 2.3 Members shared examples from schools and communities where discriminatory language and behaviours were becoming more visible and reflected on the need for early intervention and education. Suggested actions were:
- Raising EDI issues during annual reviews and service consultations
  - Challenging discriminatory language and behaviours when encountered
  - Supporting foster carers to act as allies and advocates
  - Improving education around diversity, race, culture and British history
- 2.4 Members agreed that the committee should consider producing a public statement/open letter outlining concerns and reaffirming support for equality, diversity and inclusion.

***Action: EF and GC to arrange a separate meeting with interested members to develop a committee statement/open letter on EDI.***

### **3. Baby Preston adoption case brief**

- 3.1 EF acknowledged the death of Baby Preston and the significant impact this case has across adoption, fostering, kinship care and permanence services.
- 3.2 Members reflected on the emotional impact of the case and recognised that many foster carers have experienced situations where their professional views have not been fully heard. Particular concern was expressed regarding media reports that foster carers raised concerns which were not acted upon.
- 3.3 It was noted that CoramBAAF would consider its response once the Child Safeguarding Practice Review has been completed and recommendations published.

### **4. Family time for children with disabilities and/or complex medical needs**

- 4.1 MS and JAB delivered a presentation exploring the experiences of looked after children with disabilities and complex medical needs. Challenges flagged included:
- Lack of suitable venues and facilities
  - Inaccessible contact centres
  - Insufficient changing, hoisting and sensory facilities
  - Failure to make reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010
  - Delays and disputes around home adaptations

- Equipment funding and access
- Inconsistent provision between local authorities
- Limited respite opportunities
- High levels of foster carer burnout
- Lack of specialist training and support for carers
- Additional barriers due to being both disabled and looked after

#### 4.2 Discussion highlighted the need for:

- Clear national standards
- Consistent access to training
- Better respite provision
- Appropriate family time facilities
- Greater recognition of carers' expertise and involvement in decision-making

#### 4.3 Recommendations presented included:

- Protected status for looked after disabled children
- A national handbook and standards framework
- Mandatory annual moving and handling training
- Improved respite entitlements
- Better support for the whole fostering household
- Clearer guidance regarding post-death responsibilities and planning

#### 4.4 Members strongly supported further work in this area.

***Action: EF, HAN, JAB and MS to explore opportunities to influence fostering reforms and national guidance, including sharing recommendations with relevant CoramBAAF committees and DfE contacts.***

## 5. Fostering reforms update

#### 5.1 HAN updated on the ongoing redrafting of the National Minimum Standards (NMS). The revised framework is child-centered and outcome-focused. Each standard will begin with "what this means for children". Updates were provided regarding:

- Delegated authority and day-to-day decision-making by foster carers
- Kinship care as the preferred option where appropriate
- Revisions to allegations processes
- Work is underway on TSDS and Volume 4 guidance

#### 5.2 Members discussed concerns about allegations processes, particularly:

- A perception that foster carers are treated as "guilty until proven innocent"
- The need for proportionality and context before formal escalation
- The impact allegations can have on foster carers and their families

#### 5.3 5.5 Members welcomed the opportunity to contribute to forthcoming consultations.

***Action: GC and EF to circulate information about consultation and engagement opportunities as further details become available.***

## 6. Unannounced visits, transferring foster carers and access to records

- 6.1 Due to time constraints, formal consideration of unannounced visits and transferring foster carers was deferred to a future meeting.
- 6.2 Members discussed access to records in the context of allegations and standards of care concerns. Concerns included:
- Lack of transparency regarding information held on carers' records
  - Reliance on Subject Access Requests
  - Records retaining historical concerns without sufficient context
  - The lasting impact of unsubstantiated concerns on carers' reputations
- 6.3 Members agreed that greater openness and clarity in record keeping would improve trust and confidence.

***Action: Remaining agenda items to be brought back to a future meeting for fuller discussion.***

## **7. Cara stepping down - thanks and next steps**

- 7.1 It was confirmed that CJ would be stepping down from the Co-Chair role, but would remain an active member of this committee. Members formally thanked CJ for her contribution, expressing appreciation for her commitment, insight, leadership and significant contribution to the work and development of FCAC.

***Action: Members to contact EF and GC if interested in the co-chair position.***

## **8. Any other business**

- 8.1 Members thanked JAB, MS and HAN for their thought-provoking presentations.
- 8.2 It was agreed that several agenda items would be revisited at future meetings, owing to the depth and value of discussions.
- 8.3 Members were encouraged to participate in forthcoming consultations and follow-up meetings.

***Date of next meeting: 21 October 2026***