

# Highlights of 2018

good practice guidance

expertise in family placement

unique journal

multi-disciplinary networking opportunities

specialist advice

platforms for learning and debate

bespoke training solutions

## We value your membership

Thank you for your continued membership of CoramBAAF and for being part of the UK-wide network of agencies and individuals with a shared aim – working together to secure the best outcomes for children in care.

Thousands of you engaged with us in 2018, attending our forums and events, learning from the information and publications we sent to you, and taking advantage of new and existing membership benefits.

Almost 2,000 members contacted our Advice Line with a range of enquiries, including some complex ones. Over 6,000 members received the *Adoption & Fostering Digest*, keeping you up-to-date with key developments UK-wide. Members also received Briefings, Practice Notes, selected Good Practice Guides and our quarterly journal, *Adoption & Fostering*, a platform for innovative ideas and debate on key topics. The members' area of our website, which contains a number of publications available exclusively to members free of charge, was visited more than 20,000 times.

CoramBAAF's Policy, Research and Development Team drives the organisation's programme of projects, consultation responses, Government lobbying, national advisory groups and practice forums, and includes experts in social work, law, health and research. Our consultants provided advice and guidance on complex policy and practice issues and explored topical subjects in our multi-disciplinary committees and practice forums. Colleagues also represented members' interests in national policy forums, including the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) and the Kinship Care Alliance, and responded to several consultations.

Our learning events drew hundreds of delegates, with over 100 people attending the annual health conference, and our free conferences and workshops for members also attracted a good take up. Our workshop programme focused on those topics that you value the most and we saw an increase in requests for bespoke training as well as consultancy services.

We have continued to deliver our core services, representing you and advocating on your behalf, disseminating practice guidance and influencing policy and practice where possible. We've spoken out in the media and have a lively social media presence. We continue to value your membership of CoramBAAF and hope you do the same.

**Shaila Shah**  
Managing Director

# The year

**Our vision is for every child to have a safe, secure and loving placement that will help them thrive, achieve their potential, and grow to be the happy and productive citizens of tomorrow.**

## Informing, educating and influencing

- Four editions of ***Adoption & Fostering*** containing 22 thought-provoking papers reached all our members. Notable papers included those on supporting the education of looked after children and the role of the virtual school head; children in foster care engaged with loyalty conflict; young people's views on their participation in reviews; the experiences of Muslim young people in foster care; and adoptive parents' experiences of seeing their child-to-be for the first time. There were almost 43,000 full-text downloads, testifying to the journal's influence and standing in the sector.
- Members received a Good Practice Guide on supporting the **mental health of looked after children**, which outlined why mental health difficulties can be more prevalent in looked after children and how to help children recover, and contained a useful matrix to help social workers in their assessments.
- A long-awaited guide on complying with the new Data Protection Act and the **General Data Protection Regulation** set out the duties and responsibilities of fostering services.
- A new guide on sibling placement, ***Beyond Together or Apart***, reinforced the message of the importance of sibling relationships and contact between siblings, and we also hosted a conference that explored emerging themes.



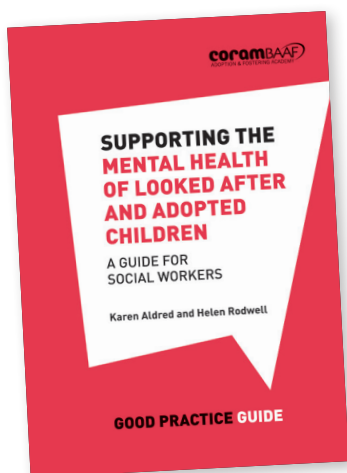
# at a glance

- Members received **Practice Notes** on smoking, revised to include guidance on e-cigarettes, and on assessing transgender applicants. **Briefings** focused on the regionalisation of adoption services, as well as the ethical and human rights framework in adoption.



- Members were also given **access online** to over 30 good practice and other guides free of charge, along with several Advice Notes and all Practice Notes and Briefings, in the members' area of our website. We also offered members a special introductory price for *Beyond Together or Apart* for a limited period, and many of you took advantage of this. Our sales further indicated that you continued to need and value our assessment guides, the *Carer-Held Health Record*, and guidance on running effective panels.
- Our monthly information bulletin, CoramBAAF **Adoption & Fostering Digest**, was emailed free of charge to over 6,000 CoramBAAF members, including individual staff in full member agencies on request. The Digest is a unique monthly UK-wide briefing for everyone working in adoption, fostering and child welfare, with coverage of the latest developments in legislation, parliamentary activity, policy, consultations, research, statistics and online resources.

If you don't already receive it, sign up by contacting [infodesk@corambaaf.org.uk](mailto:infodesk@corambaaf.org.uk).



*Reading this excellent book will help you appreciate just how complex, subtle and important supporting the development of good mental health is.*

Sarah Brennan OBE,  
former Chief Executive of YoungMinds

## Identifying priorities

- Our unique mix of committees, special interest groups and practice forums enabled members to engage with one another and inform the priorities of **our policy work**. The committees held ten meetings between April and November 2018, covering issues related to social work practice, health, law, BME perspectives and research. Key topics explored included:
  - the Education Select Committee Report, the Fostering Stocktake and the DfE's responses to these reviews;
  - the development of the regionalisation of adoption services;
  - adoption support;
  - the "Care Crisis" Review;
  - the implications of the new GDPR for agencies;
  - research on the perspectives of young people in care;
  - Brexit and the impact on looked after and adopted children;
  - the implications of recent legal judgements;
  - the preservation of a child's NHS number following adoption;
  - the learning from Serious Case Reviews.
- The current **special interest groups** focus on special guardianship and the perspectives of independent fostering providers. A new special guardianship group is being set up in Manchester.
- Our consultants facilitated and led **regional adoption and fostering practice forums** in London, Newcastle, Leeds, Taunton, Salford, Oldham and Rawtenstall, near Manchester. There were also meetings of the two black workers' groups, the national Panel Chairs Forum and the four private fostering regional groups.
- Dr John Simmonds also represented **members' interests** on the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) and the Kinship Care Alliance, and CoramBAAF consultants chaired meetings of the South East Post-Adoption Network (SEPAN), responded to consultations and spoke out in the media.

# Our agency members

**144/155** local authorities and Crown dependencies in England  
**22/22** local authorities in Wales  
**5/5** health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland  
**32/32** local authorities in Scotland (membership held by AFA Scotland)  
**AND 112** independent fostering providers  
**24** voluntary adoption agencies, **52** associate members

*As the Permanence Panel Manager, I have used the CoramBAAF advice service on many occasions. The advice given adds weight to the debates held internally and especially when in the court arena. I really welcome the opportunity of checking out practices and processes with an independent organisation and I am sure we will use the service again.*

Kathy Scott, Birmingham Children's Trust

## Achievements in this period include:

- An active role in the first phase of establishing the **Nuffield Family Justice Observatory** that will support the best possible decisions for children by improving the use of data and research evidence in the family justice system in England and Wales.
- Carrying out a national survey of fostering provision for unaccompanied migrant children as part of an EU-funded project, **Fostering Across Borders (FAB)** to strengthen fostering provision through training. The work is led by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and includes partner agencies in five European countries.
- Presenting on **early permanence** at the sixth International Conference on Adoption Research (ICAR) in Montreal, and on adoption, adoption support and kinship care at the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) conference in Sydney.

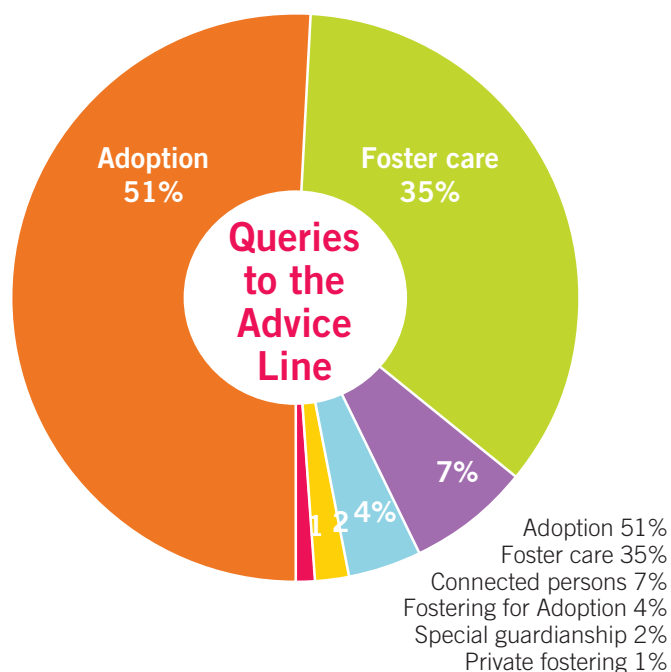
## Responding to your enquiries

Enquiries to the Advice Line continued to grow by 50%! What sets the Advice Line apart is our in-house access to Legal and Health Consultants and specialists in adoption, foster care, private fostering and BME perspectives.

There is no "typical" enquiry and we responded to questions on a range of topics, from exotic pets, e-cigarettes and DBS checks to contentious reviews, support with grieving and loss, or managing complex cases in court, as well as requests for statistics and research.

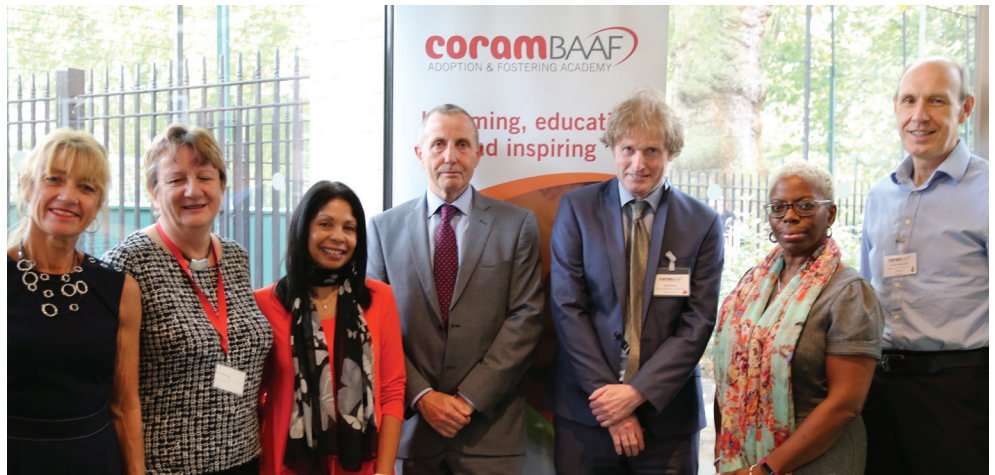
Examples of some recent complex enquiries we dealt with include:

- deprivation of liberty safeguards and how they apply in foster care;
- GDPR issues, retention, confidentiality, and access to records in fostering and adoption;
- immigration, residence and the involvement of other states' authorities in UK domestic adoption.



## Annual Members' Reception

Seventy people signed up to attend the annual Members' Reception in September. It featured presentations from Emma Balfour, DfE representative, on *Fostering Better Outcomes*, the government's response to the fostering reviews, and from Sarah Johal, the Head of Service for an RAA, plus input from members of several of the advisory committees and groups about their work.



Some of the presenters at our members' reception. From left to right: Carol Sykes (Chair, UK Social Work Practice Advisory Committee, CoramBAAF (CB)); Elaine Dibben (Adoption Development Consultant, CB); Shanti Davis, CB Northern Black Workers Group); Paul Curran (Chair, CB Board of Directors); Derek Kirton (Chair, CB Research Group); Bernadette Caines (CB Northern Black Workers Group); Dr John Simmonds OBE (Director, Policy, Research and Development Team, CB).

## Learning events

Hundreds of you attended the training events we hosted in different parts of the country. Over 1,500 people benefited from the customised training we provide to agencies, and we delivered almost 100 bespoke training courses. Popular topics included fostering assessment; permanency planning; adoption panel training; assessing siblings; and caring for teenagers in foster care.

Our workshop programme comprised over 40 events delivered nationwide. A new membership benefit included six free workshops and these were on Secure Base - many of you took advantage of these. Popular workshop topics included the role and responsibilities of panel administrators; the role and responsibilities of panel advisers; making good fostering assessments; and an introduction to the Secure Base model.

Next year we will continue to deliver on the topics you value the most but will introduce masterclasses on sibling assessments; identity issues and their importance when matching a child; and on dealing with disruptions.

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***The training course, Preventing Placement Breakdowns, offered practical tips and strategies to support placements and avoid breakdowns. It also offered insight into defined strategies/methods to follow if a placement is at risk of disrupting.***

Iain Stevenson, Achieving for Children

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## Conferences

The annual CoramBAAF health conference, held in Birmingham, provided a chance for over 120 medical, nursing, psychology, therapy and social care professionals to explore genetics, gender identity and children's mental health.

Our conference to launch our new Good Practice Guide – *Beyond Together or Apart: Planning for, assessing and placing sibling groups*, by Shelagh Beckett – was well received by the audience of 85 social workers, researchers, and other professionals. Attendees appreciated the chance to have a whole day devoted to considering the issues relating to planning for siblings and thinking about how to maintain lifelong relationships for them. And our conference on adoption support provided a valuable insight into what families have experienced and how to improve practice in this area.

Themes discussed at our free conferences for members included developing early permanence for children and non-violent resistance in fostering.

## Reaching out

Our reach and coverage expanded, in print, broadcast and social media, enabling us to comment on matters of topical importance. We gained coverage on national TV and radio programmes, including Sky News, Talk Radio and the BBC Victoria Derbyshire Show.

We also reached:

 **48,800** Facebook users on average each month

**1.4 million** readers through articles in print media

**4 million** users through coverage on **11** different websites

 and had **13,300** Twitter followers

## Online benefits

Members have made good use of the opportunities available online to book events, gain access to the Advice Line, buy membership, and of course buy books. We added a significant amount of content to the members' area of the website, as well as introducing videos filmed at our conferences, including interviews with speakers and feedback from delegates.

Since 1 April 2018, almost 90,000 individuals have visited the website and have accounted for over 500,000 page views. The bookshop and learning events pages are the most popular, as are the job vacancies we advertise and the information we offer. The members' area of our website was visited more than 20,000 times and contains a rich resource of materials, many of which can be downloaded to share with colleagues as well as service users.



The screenshot shows the CoramBAAF website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'About Us', 'Updates', 'Contact', 'Jobs', 'Login/Help', 'Stay informed', and a search bar. Below this, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Membership > Learning Events > Bookshop > Fostering & Adoption'. The main content area is titled 'Find a workshop, conference or seminar' and includes a paragraph about CoramBAAF's training services. To the right of this text is an illustration of a group of people in a meeting. Below the main text, there's a 'CONTENTS' sidebar with links like 'Find a workshop, conference or seminar', 'Conferences and seminars', 'Agency tailored training', 'Consultancy services', 'Our training team', and 'Why choose CoramBAAF?'. The main content area also features a 'Practice Notes' sidebar with links like 'Special offers', 'Inspection copies', 'CoramBAAF catalogues', 'Ordering', 'Translation rights', and 'Guidelines for authors'. The central part of the page is titled 'Recently published' and displays two book covers: 'The adopter's handbook' by Amy Neil Salter and 'Devising a placement plan' by Elaine Dibben. Each book has a brief description and a 'Read more' link. At the bottom, there are two more book covers: 'Beyond the 100,000' and 'Supporting the new foster carers and adopted children'.

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Published by CoramBAAF Adoption and Fostering Academy, 41 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ

Coram Academy Limited, registered as a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales number 9697712, part of the Coram group, charity number 312278