

**England full member agencies
membership survey 2019**

Our Response

What we did and why

CoramBAAF is committed to ensuring that the professional workforce is in the best position to deliver a consistent and evidence-informed set of services that are family- and child-centred. This may be in the early stages of problem resolution through to the challenge of providing longer term services at whatever point a need may arise over the life span.

In order to better understand the priorities and needs of our members and therefore improve the services we offer, in November 2019 we invited the employees of our full member agencies in England to complete a survey.

We were delighted that 267 respondents from a wide range of local authorities, independent fostering providers, voluntary adoption agencies and regional adoption agencies completed the survey,¹ providing a valuable insight into the needs and views of our members.

Respondents came from across England and included managers, practitioners, directors, panel Chairs and medical advisers, working in teams including adoption and permanence, fostering, adoption support, panels, looked after children, special guardianship, and family and friends care. Primary areas of work included recruitment of foster carers and adopters, health issues including mental health, lifelong issues for adopted adults and birth relatives, legal issues, and disability issues.

We would like to share a summary of the results and some of the comments you made, and explain what we plan to do for our members, based on your feedback.

What we learnt

Your membership

You told us:

97% of respondents would recommend CoramBAAF membership to a colleague or fellow professional.

You rated the following highest on a list of what CoramBAAF membership has provided you with:

- Up-to-date news on all the latest policy and legislative developments
- A comprehensive source of information
- Shared expertise to improve practice
- Resources that can save you time and improve efficiency

The CoramBAAF products and services that the greatest number of you had accessed were conferences, workshops and other learning events, the *CoramBAAF News* newsletter, *Adoption & Fostering Journal*, *Adoption & Fostering Digest* and briefings/guidance. 96% of *Adoption & Fostering Digest* readers felt that it provides the knowledge, guidance and skills to help them in their work and would recommend it to colleagues.

¹ Not all respondents answered every question in the survey so the total number of respondents varies by question.

The Digest is a great resource to keep my knowledge and understanding up to date on what is happening in the world of social work.

We will:

- Continue to provide our monthly bulletin *Adoption & Fostering Digest* which contains up-to-date information on the latest policy and legislative developments, free for all members
- Offer members a varied programme of learning events across the UK, including workshops, masterclasses and conferences, many of them at a discounted price or free for members
- Continue to offer sector specialist support via the members' only Advice Line
- Develop more resources, including guides, forms, practice notes and briefings, that will support practitioners in their work and help save time and money

Publications

You told us:

100% of respondents who have read our publications said that they provide them with knowledge, guidance and skills to support them in their work.

99% of the respondents who have seen our Good Practice Guides said that the themes are relevant to their work. 82% said that they influence/inform their practice and 72% said that they help them do their job better.

I found them concise, easy to read and understand and always gave me a starting point if I felt stuck.

You also told us that you wanted more good practice guidance on themes including kinship care and special guardianship, foster carer recruitment, pre- and post-commencement adoptions, trauma-informed practice, and managing standards of care.

We asked about how you prefer to read a range of materials – from research studies to adopter/foster carer narratives. Responses were varied, with no clear preference, and so we will continue to produce our books, guides and studies in print whilst increasing the number of resources we make available digitally in the members' area of the website.

Clear, comprehensive and promoting good practice. They have certainly supported our practice development.

We will:

- Publish good practice guides on a range of subjects, including parent and child fostering, managing allegations, the role of the supervising social worker, and learning from Serious Case Reviews
- Continue our programme of keeping our best-selling guides revised and refreshed, starting with a new edition of *Fostering Now*, our popular legal pocket guide
- Develop new forms/tools on adoption support, sibling placement, matching and risk assessment, to help practitioners with their work and ensure standardisation and best practice across the sector

Adoption & Fostering Journal

You told us:

The most read aspects of the journal are articles about UK research and practice, articles about specific themes, and legal notes. Whilst more readers are accessing the journal online, the majority still prefer to read it in print.

The majority of readers said that the journal informs their practice, builds their knowledge base, challenges their thinking, and introduces new innovations.

100% of readers would recommend *Adoption & Fostering* to colleagues.

It's like receiving a present every quarter and I welcome the impact it has on my achieving best practice...and informing staff and families that our service works with.

We will:

- Continue to ensure a good balance of nationally and internationally sourced articles, on both fostering and adoption, to provide relevance to a wide audience
- Start to plan a new special edition of the journal, taking into account comments from readers and current sector preoccupations
- Work on including more book reviews in the journal, in response to reader demand

Advice Line

You told us:

A growing number of our members are using the Advice Line – 42% of respondents had made an enquiry in the last two years. Of those who did contact us, 93% felt that their query was resolved. The majority of respondents said that the advice they received contributed to their knowledge, aided case discussions, and influenced both their own practice and practice within their agency.

Your membership advice service is outstanding. It provides comprehensive, considered and timely responses to questions. Our service has made some significant developments on the sound and professional advice and guidance provided... [It] could not be obtained elsewhere.

86% of Advice Line users were very satisfied/satisfied with the service they received.

92% of Advice Line users told us that it would be very difficult/difficult or not possible to get the same level of advice from other sources. For 70% of respondents the Advice Line is the primary source they turn to when help is required to inform their practice.

98% of users felt that the Advice Line provided them with the knowledge, guidance and skills to support them in their work and would recommend it to colleagues.

We have received what I consider to be excellent service and advice from the Advice Line – we use it regularly to inform our practice.

We will:

- Continue our commitment to providing a dedicated advice service for CoramBAAF members
- Aim to reply to enquiries within 1–2 working days or 7 working days if specialist advice from our consultants is required

Training and workshops

You told us:

Nearly half of all respondents had attended a workshop or training course in the last two years. The main reasons for not attending were time and budget constraints.

Improved greatly in recent years – seem more current, bespoke with less ‘off the shelf’ materials.

Satisfaction levels were high for those who had attended our workshops and training courses:

- 92% said that the quality of the training delivered was good/excellent
- 91% said that the content of the training was good/excellent
- 93% said that the standard of the supporting materials was good/excellent

96% of respondents who had attended would recommend a CoramBAAF workshop or training course to colleagues.

Even though only one-quarter of respondents had participated in a professional virtual learning event (e.g. webinar) in the past two years, 80% would be interested in such an event delivered by CoramBAAF.

Out deliver other providers in terms of expertise and engagement and follow up.

We will:

- Continue to broaden the locations where we hold workshops to ensure better national coverage
- Maintain competitive pricing of our workshops and value for money
- Continue to develop our workshop content and delivery on the basis of service user feedback
- Ensure easy access to workshop information and bookings through our website

Conferences

You told us:

For those who had attended a CoramBAAF conference, the main reasons for doing so were relevance to work and theme. Most of those attendees felt that the conference was competitively priced and 98% told us that it provided them with the knowledge, guidance and skills to support them in their work.

For those who had not attended a CoramBAAF conference, the key reasons were time constraints, location and budget. Several comments emphasised the need for us to consider a wider range of locations for future conferences.

We will:

- Do more to promote awareness of our conferences, via our membership networks, groups and committees
- Continue to listen to members in considering themes, topics and interesting formats for future conferences

Our conference programme for 2020/21 will address themes including:

- special guardianship
- fostering teenagers

- children's mental health
- adoption support
- fostering migrant children

Joining/Networking/Participating

You told us:

Few respondents were existing members of any of our Advisory Committees, Practice Forums and Special Interest Groups, although there was considerable interest in finding out more about them, especially the independent fostering providers special interest group, the adoption and fostering panel advisers practice forum, the special guardianship special interest group, and the research and legal groups. Comments about our groups indicated that lack of awareness is an issue.

They can be very helpful, sharing practice and resources, exploring current issues.

There was notable interest in CoramBAAF introducing the option of attending meetings 'virtually'. Among the 40% of respondents with reservations about doing this, some issues that came up were a preference for meeting in person and technological barriers.

We will:

- Continue to operate our long-standing Advisory Committees in social work, law, health and research
- Continue the existing Practice Forums and Special Interest Groups, and promote them more vigorously to increase attendance. We will also pilot the option to join remotely
- Review the viability of setting up new forums in the areas where there are gaps – notably the North West (focusing on adoption)
- Continue to ensure that the notes of Advisory Committee meetings are made available in the members' area of the website

Advocating on your behalf and contributing to practice development

You told us:

Nearly half of those surveyed had read our consultation responses. Of the 28% of all respondents who said they have given us their views to inform our consultation responses or practice issues and development, this was largely done through a practice forum, group or committee or by responding to a consultation document. We asked what more we could do to enable you to share your views with us. You told us:

- Ask regularly, keep offering opportunities
- Advertise more widely. Make consultations more accessible and visible
- Offer a wider range of options to enable busy practitioners to contribute
- Ask for *brief* responses by email, with carefully selected topics
- Use an online portal to allow practitioners to provide their views/perspectives

Ensuring that information gets to those at the practice interface, in an accessible, realistic format – bearing in mind the pressures of social work practice and limited time for reading and research.

We will:

- Continue with our active membership of:
 - The Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board
 - The National Adopter Recruitment Campaign Steering Group
 - The Alliance for Children in Care and Care Leavers
 - The Kinship Care Alliance, which we also chair
- Represent members' views in the forthcoming Government care review, including issues around unregulated placements
- Monitor the development of Regional Adoption Agencies and contribute to their implementation
- Monitor the development of the adoption support framework, including the Adoption Support Fund and Centres of Excellence in Adoption Support
- Continue to be active in the general and professional press (including a regular column in *Children & Young People Now*) and on social media
- Respond to public consultations, publish briefings and directly engage with policy-makers on key areas of policy and practice development

Communicating with you, the CoramBAAF website and social media

You told us:

The majority of respondents found the CoramBAAF website easy/very easy to navigate and find what they needed. However, less than half (43%) had set up their own personal website account and were therefore not accessing the exclusive members' area of the site. For those who had, the online resources they found most useful were Advice Notes, Practice Notes and the free downloads of guides, research studies and other CoramBAAF publications.

Social media is not widely used for professional purposes amongst our members. Of the 45% of respondents who said that they did use it, the key platforms were Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The main reasons for using social media included keeping up to date with the sector, communicating with colleagues and following sector leaders and key individuals.

We will:

- Continue to develop the wide range of resources that are freely available in the members' area of the website
- Make improvements to the website so that it is easier for you to find the information and resources that you need
- Work on producing easily accessible digital content, to potentially include podcasts, filmed talks/presentations and webinars

Meeting your needs/making improvements

You told us:

Over three-quarters of respondents felt that the resources and services that CoramBAAF has made available to them/their organisation were continuing to meet their needs, with 30% stating that they had become more relevant in the last two years.

Strong national voice/advocate for family placement.

Providing sector-led expertise, advice and guidance.

Gives a public face to adoption and fostering.

Staff are always so professional and helpful if I need anything.

Consistently high standard of policy and practice research, lobbying and advocacy.

We asked you what things we do well. Responses included:

- Keep you up to date with policy and practice developments
- Provide information, advice, support and guidance
- Offer opportunities to develop skills and build knowledge through a range of learning events
- Develop books, guides and other resources, including the journal and *Digest*, that are accessible and relevant

We also asked you what we could do better. You told us:

- Ensure that there is greater communication about membership benefits, so that all members know what is available
- Expand our reach, through forums, groups, committees and learning events, so that we have more contact with members across the whole of the UK
- Provide easier access to our materials and services

We will:

- Liaise with our link people within member organisations so that they are better supported in their role and in the vital dissemination of CoramBAAF information and resources
- Strengthen our links with members through improved direct communications, encouraging more members to subscribe to our e-newsletters and updates
- Promote greater use of membership benefits by encouraging more agency member staff to create their own web accounts
- Continue to develop the members' area of the CoramBAAF website, providing more information, resources and guidance for members

Our e-newsletters provide up-to-date information on the latest CoramBAAF news, publications, learning events, job vacancies and more.

Find out more at www.corambaaf.org.uk/subscribe

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