



Objects and their Stories

A course for carers
and social workers

‘On the lid she could see a child’s handwritten signature claiming ownership, and when she inspected it more closely, there was L’s name. It was the very same Monopoly set. No longer a lost object, but one found and restored.’

Why objects?

The objects around us are intertwined with our feelings and experiences. Exploring our relationship with objects can help us tell our stories and give us a greater understanding of other people and ourselves. The course will demonstrate how objects can evoke, release and relieve emotions, how objects can become a safe home for these feelings, and how a focus on objects can free the imagination and promote creative practices and relationships.

Who should attend?

Objects and Their Stories is designed for foster carers and social workers to build on their initial training and is a natural progression and development of life story work. The training will focus on the individual, their story, and how to incorporate this into the work they do with children and young people.

The course is structured as a reflective space for practitioners and carers, with significant time given to attendees to reflect on their own work and experiences, as well as the children and young people they support. The group is encouraged to try the skills and approaches between sessions, with communication within the group facilitated to support implementation in practice, and build a kind and reflective network for support in the longer-term.

Themes and Learning Outcomes

The training will be based around six sessions:

- How objects can be meaningful.
- Powerful and precious objects.
- Using objects to tell the world who you are.
- Uncomfortable, puzzling or painful objects.
- Using objects and collections of objects to make difficult situations easier.
- Exploring life stories through objects.

Although the focus of the training is work with children and young people, the questions posed can be helpfully asked of anyone – young or adult, personal carer or professional worker. Those attending the course will be invited to share objects from their own lives.

Participants will receive a Resource Pack, with practice examples and case studies; a quick start guide for each module; and communication between participants is facilitated to encourage support both during and after the training, with three meetings with a course 'buddy' suggested between training sessions

Our facilitators

Hedwig Verhagen

Hedwig is a therapeutic social worker who has worked in adoption and special guardianship support services in LA and VAA environments since qualifying as a social worker in 2010. She was part of the small team who set up a Centre of Excellence in Adoption Support partnership service in 2013, which later became the Centre for Adoption Support at Adoption Matters. Hedwig's therapeutic work is informed by Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), as well as body-based approaches. Her areas of special interest are Child to Parent Violence and

Aggression and the experiences of adopted young people and adults. She is currently undertaking research into birth parents' experiences of trauma.

Daniel Kearns

Dan is a registered social worker with experience in Child Protection, working with children and young people in care, and most recently in an adolescent mental health unit. He joined Coram in 2021 from the practice team at What Works for Children's Social Care, and is now the Development Lead for the Coram Innovation Incubator, a partnership between Coram, local authority partners and the private sector to develop and promote innovation in the sector.

Dates and booking details

The course consists of six sessions, run online via Zoom.

The sessions will run on a Thursday morning (10:30-12) every three weeks on 13/01, 03/02, 24/02, 17/03, 07/04, and 28/04.

Cost: £135, £111 for CoramBAAF members, or £45 if self-funded. This is a special introductory rate as the January cohort is part of the Coram pilot project.

Places on this course are limited and early booking is recommended. It is anticipated that further courses will run later in 2022, and you may be offered a later date if the January cohort is fully booked.

To apply for this course please go to the CoramBAAF [website](#).

The Objects and Their Stories course has been developed from the innovative and pioneering work of Prof Mark Doel, building on successful pilots in Sheffield, London and New York and his original work on the 'Social Work in 40 Objects' [project](#). The training has been developed with support from Coram, and funding from the Hadley Trust, and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and is a collaboration between Coram-i and CoramBAAF.

The Monopoly Set

L had a Monopoly set. She didn't have many toys and games, but this set was one of those that are specially adapted to your home town with features and shops that you know through living your life there. L was a child who was in public care and, for various reasons, she had many moves between different places – places that the professionals in her life called placements.

During one of these moves, she lost her Monopoly set, or rather it got lost. In her turbulent life, it was the only thing that had come along with her for as long as she could remember. She had none of her baby stuff and no-one had thought to keep any of the clothes that she'd outgrown over the years. Only her local Monopoly set had accompanied her on life's journey. Until now.

Her current foster carer was in the local Oxfam shop searching for a present. She was looking through the second-hand toys and games when she came across an old Monopoly box, one set in the town. She knew L's story and decided to buy it for her. On the lid she could see a child's handwritten signature claiming ownership, and when she inspected it more closely, there was L's name.

It was the very same Monopoly set. No longer a lost object, but one found and restored.

We relate this story because it feels right to introduce this course as it means to go on – via an object and a story, and the meanings and feelings that we attach to them. We can relate to this story because it speaks to a universal need to keep hold of certain objects that, for differing reasons, have become precious; and to hold on to, and share, the stories and feelings that attach to stuff.

L's tale reminds us that not everyone can rely on this continuity – of stuff and of story – and that precious things are not always recognised as precious by others, and they can easily and casually be misplaced.