

THE RACIAL JUSTICE FAMILY NETWORK (RJFN)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Scope

The RJFN is a coalition of individuals and organisations working together to develop and promote anti-racist and non-discriminatory initiatives within the family justice system.

Aims

The RJFN aims to identify and challenge policies, behaviours, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions, to ensure that the family justice system, at both individual and institutional levels, operates from an anti-racist and non-discriminatory perspective.

To manifest systemic change, the Network endeavours to unite a broader coalition of actors within the family justice system and extend its geographical reach, while fostering shared learning, encouraging active participation, and drawing insights from existing initiatives.

The Network draws on the latest research and evidence-informed practice, working alongside those with lived experience of racism in the family justice system. It aims to equip the family justice system with the knowledge, values, and skills to foster transformative change and promote a more equitable approach to family justice.

It also provides a forum for member organisations to work collaboratively, share information and best practices, identify common areas of interest or concern, explore ideas, discuss priorities, and pinpoint specific issues requiring collective action (where this is likely to achieve more than doing so separately).

Values

Network members share and sign up to the following values:

- Promote anti-racism and anti-discriminatory practices within the family justice system.
- Amplify the voices of children and families who have lived experience of the family justice system, with a particular emphasis on those who have been negatively impacted by racism and discrimination in the family justice system.
- Support change through meaningful action.
- Empower all those involved in the family justice system to defend the rights of children and families experiencing racism and discrimination.
- Engage people with lived experience of racism within family justice to participate in the Network.
- Foster a workforce that is supported and trained to be child-centred and trauma-informed.

Membership

Membership in the Network is open to any organisation or individual directly involved with children and families within the family justice system in England and Wales, is committed to pursuing the Network's values, and willing to adhere to these terms of reference.

Organisations and individuals interested in becoming members should use the online contact form or email rjfn@corambaaf.org.uk directly. The chair may approve or remove members who are not acting in the best interests of the Network, at their discretion.

Organisations are members rather than individuals. An individual attending on behalf of an organisation is seen as a representative of that organisation. They must have the organisation's permission and take primary responsibility for communicating the Network's work to their organisation, serving as the main contact point regarding the Network.

Organisations that are constitutionally unable to become members of the Network or fully adhere to the terms of reference may be granted observer status, provided they commit to the Network's aims and values.

Members may also join the Network in a personal capacity. Attendance in a personal capacity does not imply that the individual is speaking on behalf of any organisation they work for or are associated with.

Members are expected to participate fully in the Network's activities by attending most meetings and actively engaging in working groups. By joining the RJFN, members consent to share their email addresses with other members and receive communications regarding research and policy updates, practice developments, events, and resources.

Branding

The Network logo should be included on publications and promotional materials produced by the Network or used to promote events organised by the Network. By agreeing to the terms of reference, organisations consent to have their logo displayed on the Network's website and should notify the chair to have it removed.

Conflict of interest

Every effort should be made by all members to discuss issues in a safe, open, and professional manner. Where different viewpoints arise, members should be respectful of all opinions.

If the Network needs to take a public stance on an issue where there is no consensus, all members (including those not in attendance at a meeting) should be given the opportunity to express their views. While relying solely on a majority vote may not always be appropriate, a majority of members and organisations may take a public stance, though not all members will be bound by it. Decisions on whether to take a public stance without consensus should be made on a case-by-case basis. This should be clearly communicated in any public

statements, specifying that the position has been agreed by a majority of members, not all. Where appropriate, communications should identify the members who support the stance.

Meetings

The Network will meet quarterly, with the option of additional meetings as needed. The full membership is expected to attend quarterly meetings, while working groups will convene necessary.

Meetings will be scheduled to last 75 minutes. To promote open discussion, they will not be recorded, and PowerPoint or other presentation tools should be used only when essential. The privacy of individuals and the anonymity of children must always be respected.

Decisions regarding Network activities and policy positions will be made at main meetings. The chair will distribute the minutes after each meeting. Working group leads should report on their progress at the main meetings and seek consensus on any necessary activities or decisions.

These terms of reference will be reviewed and/or renewed, as necessary, and at least once every two years.

Working groups

Working groups of the Network will be formed from the membership to carry out specific tasks or activities related to the Network's work. These tasks may be short-term or one-off, such as preparing a joint statement in response to a specific development, or they may have a broader scope, such as addressing a theme or area of work.

Members will approve the establishment of working groups and their thematic focus at main meetings. In doing so, they authorise working groups to lead activities, ensuring that all actions align with the Network's values.

Working groups will meet as needed and disband once their purpose is fulfilled. SMART goals—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—should be set to guide objectives and track progress, with all materials kept brief and concise.

Each group will have a lead member responsible for scheduling and chairing meetings, as well as providing updates during Network meetings. Members interested in leading should inform the chair. If more than one member volunteers, the role can be shared.

Chairing

The Network is hosted by CoramBAAF, who will nominate an employee to act in the capacity of chair. The chair is responsible for the strategic overview and facilitation of the Network, and should fulfil the following responsibilities:

- Steer the Network towards greater effectiveness in acting as a unified force for children and families within the family justice system.
- Encourage and facilitate the sharing of information, views and good practice among member organisations.
- Chair Network meetings in an effective and inclusive manner, ensuring that all members can contribute, agenda issues are discussed, and action points followed up.
- Manage the administration of the Network, primarily by organising and hosting meetings, taking and distributing minutes, coordinating agreed actions, handling members' queries, and maintaining the Network's online presence.
- Coordinate the representation of the Network at meetings with key stakeholders, and act as the signatory for correspondence on behalf of the Network.
- Sign off on consultation responses, media statements, and external communications from the Network, prior to dissemination.

The chair's functions can be delegated to volunteers, members or other colleagues. The term of office will be two years. The sitting chair may be re-nominated.

Approved by the Racial Justice Family Network – 24 September 2024