



Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies

Registered address:
Caritas Care
Att. CVAA
218 Tulketh Road
Ashton on Ribble
Preston, Lancs
PR2 1ES

Ms Vicky Ford MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families

19 March 2020

Dear Minister,

Coronavirus and the loss of adoption capacity

We are writing again on behalf of a charity sector that provides a critical public service. Our not-for-profit agencies provide a quarter of all adoption placements in the UK, and 95% are judged to be Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.

The safety of children must be a priority for us all in this very difficult time and progressing adoption placements must defer to the more immediate child protection concerns. However, the impact of the current situation has the potential to destroy a part of the adoption landscape that is critical to the delivery of UK adoption.

Our agencies operate under charity law and guidance. The vast majority are small- and medium-sized local charities with modest reserves in line with Charity Commission guidance. These will only sustain them for a maximum of 2 to 3 months.

You will know that income from adoption placement fees is the primary source of income for these agencies. We have already seen that the pandemic has led to a significant reduction in placement activity and it could potentially cease altogether for some time – leaving agencies without the ability to pay wages or sustain their organisations. They are currently planning, of course, to reduce their staffing and costs, but without urgent action the Government stands to lose a substantial proportion of its placement capacity.

The nature of the adoption market places all the risk on providers at the same time as prohibiting the creation of a safety net through surpluses. These same market conditions make commercial solutions such as business loans unobtainable and overdraft facilities very difficult to negotiate. We are seeking your support to find an urgent solution to this. We stand ready to work with your officials to explore all options for Government intervention such as bridging finance, grant aid, interest-free loans, and the option of pre-payment for placements.

Without swift action the nation stands to lose a set of charitable organisations which have been the bedrock of the adoption system for decades. We hope you share our concern and look forward to hearing from you very soon.

With best regards,

Ray Shostak, CBE
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Maggie Jones
CEO

cc. Secretary of State for Education Gavin Williamson MP