

Statement of Purpose

THOMAS CORAM FOUNDATION OF CHILDREN

ADOPTION AND PERMANENT FAMILIES SERVICE

URN: SC048496

CORAM FOSTERING

URN: SC034087

Publication Date: October 2023
Review Date October 2024



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1. Introduction

It is a requirement of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption that an adoption service produces a statement of purpose, outlining its aims and objectives; a description of the service it provides, and the facilities it provides. This document is the Statement of Purpose for the Thomas Coram Foundation for Children Voluntary Adoption Agency.

This statement of purpose is written in accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and associated Regulations, and the Adoption Statutory Guidance 2013.

It fulfils the statutory requirements of:

- Regulation 2 and 4 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003;
- Regulations 3 and 24B and Regulations 4 and 24C of the Voluntary Adoption Agencies; and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003;
- Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2014
- Regulations 5 and 6 of the Adoption Support Agencies (England) and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2005
- The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (miscellaneous amendments) Regulations 2003 – Schedule 1
- Fostering Service (England) Regulations, 2011.
- Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011
- Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011
- Care Planning Regulations 2010
- Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (amended 2011)
- Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption Agencies & Independent Review of Determinations (Amendment Regulations 2011)
- Adoption Agencies (Panel & Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012
- Care Planning, placement and Case and fostering services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Care Standards Act 2000

Ofsted inspects Adoption Agencies against these standards.

2. About the Registered Service

The Registered Provider is Coram, which is a children’s charity established by Royal Charter and Act of Parliament in 1739 as the Foundling Hospital. The Adoption and Permanent Families Service is one of the main childcare services, which are run by the charity.

The charity’s address is: Coram, 41 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1A.

2 Coram Ambitious for Adoption Regional Agency, 41 Brunswick Square, London WC1N 1AZ.

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Thomas Coram Foundation for Children (Coram) has been registered as a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) since 1972.

Coram Fostering is a registered Independent Fostering Agency (IFA), which operates its Early Permanence service as an integral part of the Voluntary Adoption Agency, rather than a standalone IFA.

Coram VAA guides and supports people who wish to adopt to enable them to make informed decisions about their adoption journey. This includes assessing, preparing and training prospective adopters using a range of resources to ensure adopters are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide loving and secure families to children requiring adoption within our partner local authorities and nationally. We understand that each child and family is unique and work closely with our families and local authorities to match the right child to the right family.

The fostering service registration relates only to the provision of placements of younger children, generally aged 0-3 years, on an Early Permanence basis with households who are dually approved as adopters and foster carers.

Coram VAA also offers a birth records information and counselling service to former Foundling pupils and their descendants, and to those placed for adoption by Coram.

As a registered VAA, the agency is subject to regular inspection by Ofsted.

3. Regional Adoption Agency – Coram Ambitious for Adoption

In July 2019, Coram was commissioned by the local authorities London Borough of Harrow and the City of London to deliver the services of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) Coram Ambitious for Adoption.

The Coram Ambitious for Adoption RAA is made up of nine participating local authorities including Harrow, Bromley, City of London, Hillingdon, Redbridge, Waltham Forest and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster City Council and Slough Borough Council. Coram staff provide management of the RAA, family finding and local level post adoption support services.

Participating authorities to Coram Ambitious for Adoption RAA have delegated some of their responsibilities for adoption services to the regional agency.

In summary, the services commissioned to meet the objectives of a regional adoption agency are as follows:

- a. To receive sufficient Coram adopters and early permanence carers from the Coram VAA to meet the needs of children with a plan for adoption from each participating local authority within the RAA. This may include the assessment of foster carers wishing to be approved as adopters.
- b. To provide Panel services for the approval of prospective adopters and early permanence carers and to



provide recommendations to the local authority ADM regarding matching of children with a plan for adoption.

- c. To work in partnership with each local authority within the RAA to identify children as early as possible for adoption or early permanence placements and contribute to care planning to minimise delay for children.
- d. To provide family finding and matching services for children within each participating local authority in the RAA.
- e. To provide a range of statutory post adoption support services for eligible children, families and adults on behalf of the local authority within the RAA, according to the local agreement.

Regional Adoption Agencies may be subject to an RAA Ofsted Themed Inspection.

4. Principles and Values Statement

The Requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014 underpin the principles and values of our service:

- a. Children are entitled to grow up as part of a loving family, which can meet their needs during childhood and beyond, and where possible this should be within their own family.
- b. The needs, safety and welfare of children are at the centre of the adoption process.
- c. The child's wishes and feelings will be taken into account at all stages.
- d. Achieve positive and timely outcomes for children with a plan for adoption, recognising that delays can have a detrimental impact on their health and development.
- e. The child's ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, language and sexuality will be fully recognised, positively valued and promotes when decisions are made.
- f. The specific needs of disabled children will be fully recognised when decisions are made.
- g. The role of adoptive parents in offering a permanent family to a child who cannot live with their birth family will be valued and respected.
- h. The lifelong implications of adoption for all involved is recognised from the start and requires commitment from many organisations, professionals and individuals to work together to deliver comprehensive support to meet the individual needs of adopted children, adopters, adopted adults and birth families.



5. Aims and Objectives

The VAA and RAA is committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Children and Families Act 2014 by:

- A. Ensuring the provision of a high quality adoption service which provides the best possible standards of care, safety and protection for children or young people who are looked after and who need adoptive placements.
- B. Ensuring those whose lives have been affected by adoption are helped to identify and receive appropriate services.
- c. Working in partnership with adoptive families and other agencies ensuring the service meets statutory requirements and adheres to good practice, within the principles of value for money for the agency.

Objectives of the VAA:

- To promote best practice in permanence planning for children.
- To minimise delay in family finding, prioritising the needs of the child.
- To ensure children who are placed for adoption are supported to understand their life story and relationships with significant people from their birth family network, are promoted and maintained through direct or indirect contact as appropriate to each child.
- To provide information to applicants interested in becoming adopters on the process and on the children requiring adoption.
- To actively recruit adopters and foster carers from a diverse range of backgrounds who have the ability to meet the needs of children needing adoption within the regional agency and beyond.
- To ensure adopters receive appropriate preparation, training, support and advice to enable them to offer a secure loving home and the best possible standards of parenting, safety and protection to adopted children.
- To recruit and support carers who are willing and able to be dually approved as foster carers and as prospective adopters to undertake early permanence placements for children aged 0-3 where the final care plan remains uncertain.
- To support early Permanence carers to work with birth families to facilitate contact and rehabilitation home where this is achievable.
- To provide post placement support to newly created and existing adoptive families.
- To provide access to information, counselling, intermediary services and support as appropriate to adults whose lives have been affected by adoption, including adopted adults and their birth relatives.
- To ensure that any decisions are transparent and fair.
- To ensure concerns about the service are addressed and that information about the complaint's procedure is made available.
- To ensure that the organisation regularly reviews the services it provides, consults with, and learns from, those in receipt of their services through comments,



compliments, and complaints

Objectives of the RAA:

To work with each local authority within the RAA to enable best outcomes for children where adoption is the plan:

- Through the location of adoption services within each local authority, early identification and matching of children with a proposed plan for adoption to avoid delay in the child's journey to permanence.
- Delivering sufficiency in the commissioned regional adoption agency to enable best chances for children requiring adoption through timely and quality adoptive placements in line the scope of the service specification for the RAA and the scale and quality of the delivery system.
- Investing in our workforce to ensure staff have the right skills, knowledge and capacity for reflective and inspired practice to deliver excellent services.
- Actively listening to complaints and feedback from users of the service, ensuring we continue to learn and develop, informing the cycle of provision.
- Engaging with young people and adopters through coproduction approaches that inform the work of the regional agency.
- Safely commissioning the delivery of services for adopters and children through the network of specialist adoption support services.

6. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice are intrinsic to the delivery of the service. Coram VAA operates within equality legislation and the charities policies. The importance of respectful, honest and collaborative relationships provides a framework for all of the work we do with children, families and partner agencies, regardless of race, colour, religion, language, culture, disability, gender, sexual orientation or age. Every attempt will be made to secure an adoptive family which meets a child's emotional and developmental needs, considering their ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender and disability whilst acknowledging the need to avoid undue delay

7. Registered Managers/Responsible Officers

Sue Lowndes, Managing Director of Coram Ambitious for Adoption is the **Responsible Individual for the Voluntary Adoption Agency** and the services of Coram Ambitious for Adoption, under Regulation 5 of the Voluntary Adoption Agency (England) Regulations 2003. She is also **Responsible Individual for Coram Fostering**. She is **Agency Decision Maker (ADM)** for recommendations from Coram Adoption and Fostering Panel regarding the approval of adopters and foster carers.

Caroline Keane, Head of Service, **Adoption Manager for the VAA**, overseeing the recruitment, training, assessment and approval of prospective adopters and foster carers and the post adoption support of families.



She is **Agency Decision Maker (ADM)** for recommendations from Coram Adoption and Fostering Panel regarding the approval of adopters and foster carers.

Caroline Keane is the **Interim Registered Manager** of Coram Fostering for the provision of Early Permanence Programme within the Adoption Service.

Local Authority Agency Decision Maker - Each participant local authority to the RAA has a nominated senior officer with experience of adoption services as the Agency Decision Maker (ADM). The ADM's retain a twofold responsibility in relation to adoption i.e. (1) the responsibility for decisions for a Looked after Child and/or relinquished babies to be placed for adoption and (2) the consideration of a panel recommendation for placement of a child and the decision to place a child with a particular adoptive family (the match).

The nominated ADM for each participant local authority is as follows:

- London Borough of Harrow – Parmit Chahal
- London Borough of Redbridge – John Anthony and Caroline Cutts
- London Borough of Bromley – Richard Baldwin
- London Borough of Waltham Forest - Daniel Phelps
- The City of London - Chris Pelham
- London Borough of Hillingdon – Tehs Kauser
- Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea - Glen Peache
- Westminster City Council - Nicky Crouch
- Slough Borough Council – Susan Butcher

8. Organisational Structure

See Appendix A for the service structure

Sue Lowndes: Managing Director and Head of RAA
sue.lowndes@coram.org.uk

Caroline Keane: Head of Service, London Adoption and Permanent Families Service
caroline.keane@coram.org.uk

Coram VAA Adoption Managers:

Maggie Davies: Recruitment and Assessment & Lead RAA link
Maggie.davies@coram.org.uk

Heather Atkinson: Recruitment and Assessment & Adopter Training lead
Heather.atkinsonSL@coram.org.uk

Hannah Moss: Recruitment and Assessment & Early Permanence Lead



Hannah.moss@coram.org.uk

Laura Harris: Adoption Support

Laura.harris@coram.org.uk

Tony Quinn: Coram Adoption and Fostering Panel Advisor

Tony.quinn@coram.org.uk

Coram Ambitious for Adoption RAA Service Managers:

London Borough of Harrow and London Borough of Hillingdon

Hellan Timothy-James Hellan.timothy-james@harrow.gov.uk

Harrow Council Civic Centre Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2UW

London Borough of Redbridge and London Borough of Waltham Forest

George Layzell George.layzell@redbridge.gov.uk

London Borough of Redbridge Children's Services Station Road Centre, Barkingside, Essex, IG6 1NB

London Borough of Bromley

Ana Parr Ana.Parr@bromley.gov.uk

Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley, BR1 3UH

Bi-Borough [Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster City Council]

Sally Beaumont sbeaumont@westminster.org.uk

4 Frampton Street, Marylebone, London NW8 8LF

Slough Children First (Slough Borough Council)

Susan Chapman susan.chapman2@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk

Slough Children First, Observatory House, 25 Windsor Road, Slough, SL12EL

9. Qualifications and Experience of Staff

All of the professional staff involved in Coram Ambitious for Adoption RAA hold relevant qualifications including a: CQSW, Dip SW, Degree, or Masters level Social Work qualification. All Social Work staff are registered with Social Work England and have an enhanced DBS check.

Social workers, managers and leaders of the service(s) have opportunities to continue their professional development and to attain post qualifying training and awards relevant to the service.



10. The Service to Prospective Adopters

Anyone interested in finding out more about adoption can access information on adopting with Coram via our website [About us | Coram Adoption](#), make contact through our enquiry line 020 7520 0383 or our duty email adoption@coram.org.uk.

Initial contact

At first contact, enquirers are usually given information verbally about the adoption process and invited to an information session. Following attendance at an information event, there are likely to be more information sharing discussions with a social worker or manager, and enquirers may be offered an initial meeting with a social worker, where a more detailed discussion about the individual circumstances of a family will take place. This is a good opportunity for families to ask questions and consider the potential impact of adoption on them, their family and any children they might adopt both now and in the future. If adopting as a couple both partners will need to be present for the visit. The Social worker makes a recommendation about whether the adoption enquiry should proceed which. A manager reviews this. If the decision is made not to proceed, families will be offered advice regarding further preparation and or recommendations for further research.

Next Steps

Prospective adopters will be asked to submit a Registration of Interest (ROI) form to progress to the formal stages of assessment. Coram will either accept the ROI or give clear written reasons why it is not considered appropriate to proceed with the enquiry. If the ROI is accepted then Stage 1 of the assessment process commences.

Formal Assessment

The adoption assessment process is detailed, intense and requires time and commitment from the allocated social worker and prospective adopters. The process will involve a detailed assessment of the prospective adoptive family, support networks and lifestyle. This is essential to make sure we know our adopters and to ensure that make the right decisions for the children requiring adoptive families.

The process takes place in two stages and an independent panel makes a recommendation at the end of the process before a final decision is made on suitability.

Stage One

- Stage one of the process begins when we have accepted the Registration of Interest Form (ROI). The Registration of Interest provides all of the information we need to complete the statutory checks. These checks include health and local authority checks, Police Disclosure and Barring service checks (DBS). We will also make contact with your personal referees.
- The prospective adopter will be allocated a social worker in the Recruitment & Assessment Team. A Stage one agreement will be completed based on the individual circumstances and needs of the



prospective adopter and prospective adopters will be asked to complete stage one workbook. We will also invite all prospective adopters to attend preparation groups and access further information and training.

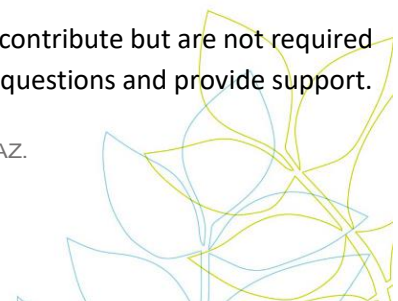
- Stage one statutory checks and the workbook must be completed and reviewed by the line manager before Stage two can commence.
- We aim to complete stage one within two months. However, there are a number of factors that might not make this possible, for example delays with checks being received or individual circumstances of the prospective adopter(s).

Stage Two

- Once statutory checks have been satisfactorily received, the prospective adopters will meet with their allocated social worker and a manager to discuss whether the agency will accept a formal application into Stage two, with particular reference to the children whom the agency seeks to place for adoption/early permanence. If the decision is to proceed, a Stage two agreement meeting is convened.
- If applicants wish to be considered for dual approval as foster carers for the purpose of early permanence placements, they will need to complete additional elements of the assessment and training in relation to the role and expectations of foster carers.
- The allocated social worker will be responsible for completing the Prospective Adopters Report (PAR). This will usually be the social worker who completed stage one, but there may be times where it is not possible.
- The assessment is used to help prospective adopters to consider carefully and honestly what they want from adoption and what they can offer a child. Many children have had difficult life experiences and come from complex backgrounds. Prospective adopters will have time to think carefully about the children's needs and how they can meet them. We ask many detailed questions about family background, childhood and adult experiences, relationships, and present circumstances.
- For prospective adopters adopting as part of a couple, the social worker will see both partners together and individually. The assessment process is demanding and will take around four months to complete.
- Once completed, the PAR will be shared with the prospective adopters/foster carers and they are given five days to review it and provide any written comments on the report. These comments form part of the final written document.

The Adoption Panel

- Applicants are invited and encouraged to attend panel and invited to contribute but are not required to do so. The social worker will also be present to answer any further questions and provide support.



- Panel members consider the prospective adopters report and will make their recommendation on suitability to adopt. The full minutes from the adoption panel meeting, the prospective adopters report and any associated paperwork will then be sent to the agency decision maker for Coram, and they will formally decide on the prospective adopters' suitability to adopt, based on the paperwork and the recommendation from the adoption panel.

Matching and Support

- Once an adopter's approval or dual approval as foster carers and adopters is confirmed the allocated social worker will work with the adopter to identify a child whose needs are compatible with the skills and experience of the prospective adopters. This will include identifying links with children within our RAA partner local authorities, sharing profiles of children from other RAA's, supporting adopters to create a profile on Link Maker and attend Exchange and Activity Days.
- Each child where adoption is a likely plan will have an allocated worker from the family finding team. The family finder works closely with the child's social worker to consider matches for that child. When a match is, being considered adopters are given the Child Permanence Report and all appropriate written information about the child, their background and assessed needs. The report will include details of any proposal for contact with the birth family. Adopters meet with the child's social worker and other relevant professionals for that child including the child's foster carer(s), medical advisor, etc. to enable them to make an informed decision regarding their ability to meet the needs of the child. A Life Appreciation Day and 'bump into' meeting with the child may be arranged, depending on the age and circumstances of the child. Details of adoption support will also be discussed.
- The proposals for the placement will then be set out in the adoption placement report, which will be seen by the prospective adopters before panel and comments and observations will be included in the panel documentation.

Matching Process

- The child's social worker, the prospective adopters and their social worker will attend the Adoption Panel. The process for panel is the same as for approval with recommendations being made to the Agency Decision Maker for the Local Authority who has responsibility for the child. The Agency Decision Maker will make the decision on whether the adopters are suitable for a specific child.

Transition Planning

- If a match is agreed, an introduction-planning meeting is arranged to plan for the introduction and placement of the child. This meeting will involve the foster carer for the child, the prospective adopters, and the relevant social workers. The meeting will establish that the adoptive family has all the information available about the child and will agree a plan for the detailed introduction process. This may involve an initial "bump into" meeting with the child (if this hasn't happened prior to matching panel) and some play dates as a way of building connections and familiarity with the child before formal introductions begin. The plan will be closely monitored and reviewed throughout the transition period to ensure everyone feels comfortable and supported.



- There are some variations to this process if prospective adoptive parent/s are dually approved as Early Permanence carers, are second time adopters, or foster carers adopting the child they have been fostering. These differences will be carefully explained to prospective adoptive parents from the beginning of their adoption process.

Meeting Birth Parents

- Most adopters will meet the child's birth parents either prior to placement, or sometimes, if more appropriate, later once birth parents may be more able to accept the plan of adoption. It is likely that a social worker will support the initial meeting in a suitable venue.
- There are many benefits to be gained from meeting birth parents, including helping to begin a relationship that may develop over time that is mutually supportive to the child. If due to individual circumstances, meeting the birth parents is not possible, social workers will still encourage some level of contact with other members of the birth family.

Post Placement

- When a child is placed for adoption, the allocated social worker for the adoptive parent(s) will continue to provide support and guidance alongside the child's social worker. Both the child's social worker and the family's adoption social worker, in line with statutory requirements and the individual needs of the child and adoptive parent, will undertake regular visits.
- The child remains 'looked after' until an Adoption Order is made. Statutory reviews are undertaken within 20 days of the placement, no more than 3 months after the first review and thereafter no more than 6 months after the third and subsequent reviews, until the Adoption Order is granted.
- Adoption Support and the Adoption Order application will be discussed and reviewed at the child's statutory reviews, post placement. An Adoption Order can be submitted 10 weeks after a child has been placed with their adoptive family, but most families wait until at least the second statutory review before submitting their application, and this is often the preference of the placing local authority.
- Both the family and child's social workers will prepare a report for court. Life story material will be provided for the child by the child's social worker and given to the adopters to share with the child. The child's social worker is responsible for ensuring that a "later in life letter" is completed before the Adoption Order is made, which will give an account of the circumstances of the adoption.
- If a child is placed under an Early Permanence arrangement prior to the final care plan being determined, the placement will be supervised, managed and supported by the Coram VAA social worker in line with statutory fostering regulations. The child's Social Worker will also continue to visit to support and the child Looked After Children reviews will continue to be undertaken in line with statutory requirements.



Annual Reviews of Adopters

- If it has not been possible to identify a match within 12 months from approval, the adoption social worker and their manager will conduct a review with the adopter/s. The process is an opportunity for all to explore the reasons for no suitable match being identified and consider if further training or support may be helpful. If no placement has been made within two years of approval, an updated report will go to adoption panel for consideration. Checks and references may need to be updated as part of this process.

11. Coram VAA Adoption Support

We understand that adopted children may need more support at different times in their lives.

- Prior to the Adoption Order being granted, the allocated adopters' social worker will continue to provide support to the family, alongside the child's social worker. The adopters' social worker will ensure that the adopters have access to local support networks and specialist organisations and any events organised through the adoption service.
- The agency has a specialist Post Adoption Support Team, who offer a range of Adoption support services once the Adoption Order is granted, alongside the child's placing or residing local authority. There is not usually an allocated social worker within the Post Adoption Support Team. Although we recognise that sometimes families require additional support, so a social worker may be allocated for a period of time to provide focused intervention and guidance. The Post Adoption Support Team can also signpost to other services for those affected by adoption, including:
 - Adoptive parents
 - Adopted children and young people
 - Birth parents
 - Adopted adults
- Other Support available to Coram Adoptive families include:
 - Duty Advice and support Line.
 - Support as appropriate to each family, including facilitating access to records and intermediary services.
 - Support with direct and indirect contact between adopted children and birth relatives as appropriate for each child.
 - Regular newsletter to keep you up to date with developments in adoption, training and useful resources.
 - An annual picnic for adoptive families.
 - 'Stay and play' drop-ins, which run on the first Friday of every month.
 - Parenting programmes for families with children from toddlers through to teenage years.
 - Help and advice with education and health services for your children.
 - Training and workshops.
 - Peer support through the Adopter Hub and Support Groups.



- Coram VAA is part of the [Support Gateway](#) providing adoptive families with fast and easy access to therapeutic support including art and music therapy, metallisation-based therapy and other child and family psychological help. You can use the Adoption Support Fund to help pay for this service.

You can find out more about Coram VAA adoption support services via our website [Adoption supportCoram Adoption](#) or email adoption@coram.org.uk

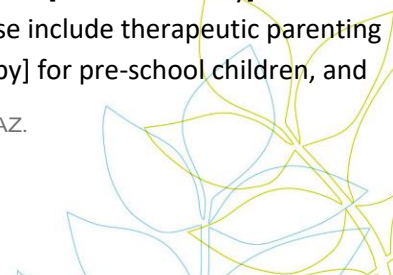
12. The Service to Children within the RAA Partner Local Authorities

Local Level RAA Family Finding, Matching and Placement

- Coram staff co-located within the partner Local Authority within the RAA undertake family finding activity within the RAA.
- The activity is linked to the permanence planning arrangements for each Local Authority partner, the regional agency managers are fully informed of the children with a potential plan for adoption through the chairing of permanence planning meetings.
- Family finding activity includes early information sharing of children with a plan for adoption with all Coram RAA approved adopters, the use of exchange events, adoption activity days where required, as well as forums such as Link Maker.
- RAA Family Finders seek to identify the best match for a child and where a Coram adopter is not located will access an inter-agency funding agreement with each local authority to undertake a timely search and may utilise the RAA *step up* programme of specific family finding activity to progress this. The *step up* programme has been developed within the RAA to support the linking and matching of priority children (children with a black or mixed heritage background, sibling groups or children with complex needs) where family finding may take longer.

Local Level RAA Adoption Support Offer

- Statutory adoption support for the RAA is provided by co-located Coram staff, which includes a range of adoption support services; advice, guidance and information regarding relevant services including counselling, birth records counselling, support with contact arrangements (direct and letterbox), intermediary services, access to adopter peer support and more targeted support through access to therapeutic support via the adoption support fund.
- All families within the RAA partnership can also access the following services delivered directly by the Coram Adoption Support Team and or the Coram Creative Therapy Team [Coram Gateway]. Some of these services are delivered through the Adoption Support Fund. These include therapeutic parenting support, workshops and webinar series, harmony group [music therapy] for pre-school children, and



parenting programmes such as The Incredible Years and the STOP programme [parents of teens]. Families also have access to 'CATCH', an online platform for of training, resources and peer support. Services from PAC- UK may also be available to some families. More information on local services for families within the RAA is available on the Coram Ambitious for Adoption website

<https://www.coramadoption.org>

- In addition, *all* adopted families are entitled to:
 - A summary of your child's health from your local authority medical adviser.
 - A 'life story' book to help your child understand their early life.
 - The Early Years Pupil Premium - this is funding to help your child's Early Years setting improve their provision for children who need more support.
 - Priority admission to the school of your choice.
 - Your child's school can also claim the Pupil Premium - this is additional funding to help meet your child's needs.
 - Adoption Support Fund - funding for a range of therapeutic services, which you can access if your family qualifies.

You can find out more on the [First4Adoption](#) website.

13. Monitoring, Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Services

The Coram VAA undertakes regular internal and external scrutiny to ensure that services are robust and of good quality. This will be achieved by:

- i) supervision & oversight of the service:**
 - a. All Coram social workers/senior practitioners/ managers receive regular reflective supervision and an annual appraisal. The frequency depends on the needs of the supervisee but is generally not less than monthly. Coram has a supervision policy.
 - b. Regular file audits are undertaken by Managers to ensure compliance and to identify good practice and areas of improvement.
 - c. Assessments of prospective adopters/foster carers are discussed in-group supervision sessions as well as in individual supervision, and second opinion visits to adoptive applicants are undertaken if appropriate.
 - d. Regular team meetings take place and whole service meetings to consider and analyse performance across the service and for staff to take part in thematic practice development sessions.



- e. There is an induction programme for new staff and Adoption and Fostering Panel Members. All panel members have annual appraisals to monitor performance and ensure on going improvements in the delivery of panel.
- f. Coram RAA Managers work to the local arrangements with individual local authorities regarding audit activity and policy development. All local authorities within the RAA have a contract-monitoring meeting incorporating performance data, complaints, staffing regarding the contractual arrangements at least bi annually. The Strategic Governance Board meets quarterly with regular reporting on performance, how resources are being deployed and staffing levels.

ii) **safeguarding:**

- a. All safeguarding issues or serious concerns about placements are discussed with the Managing Director and/or Head of Service for the local authority partner by the relevant Manager and are acted on and recorded by the social worker in accordance with the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.
- b. All safeguarding concerns are reported to the appropriate statutory authority promptly investigated to ensure that children are safe and receiving appropriate care and that any lessons about the future operation of the service are disseminated and learnt.
- c. There is a quarterly return of safeguarding referrals and file audits to the Children's Services Committee, including quarterly and annual summaries to review themes and take any action necessary.
- d. Where children are placed for adoption or foster care, any safeguarding concerns, complaints, accidents, serious illnesses of children, children missing, deaths of children are fully notified and recorded as required and referred to the Managing Director. Such events, incidents and concerns will be appropriately.
- e. Coram staff located within a local authority setting refer to the local safeguarding procedures.

iii) **The role of the Adoption and Fostering Panel**

- The Adoption and Fostering Panel is constituted in accordance with legislation, regulations and guidance. There is a central list of over 20 approved panel members, including three Chairs and three Vice-Chairs. A Panel Adviser and Panel Administrator support the work of the panel. A minimum of five panel members are required to be present for the panel to be quorate to make a recommendation on the suitability of applicants or placement of children for adoption with adopters.
- Members of the Adoption and Fostering Panel include individuals with personal experience of adoption, adopters and adopted adults and other independent members with professional



experience of adoption, fostering and looked after children. Panels are balanced as far as possible in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and experience.

- The purpose of the panel is to consider all applications for approval from prospective adopters and foster carers (for early permanence) and makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker.
- The panel considers all applications for the approval of a match between a child/ren from the RAA and suitable adopters. This recommendation goes to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) for the relevant Local Authority of the child being placed. The panel also consider placements for adoption where the birth parent(s) request their child be adopted. The recommendation of the match goes to the ADM for the relevant Local Authority.
- The panel consider, on occasions 'brief reports' on adoption and fostering applications during Stage 2 of the assessment on whether the assessment to approve adopters should continue if the agency is considering terminating the assessment. The recommendation is made to the Agency Decision Maker for the RAA.
- The panel can consider reports on proposed or actual placements for the purpose of information and advice, and on the progress of placements from time to time.
- The panel consider reports on disrupted placements; reports of any case referred to the IRM and advises on lessons to be learned.
- The panel perform a quality assurance function, commenting on the standard of reports received and the quality of assessments.
- A bi-annual and annual report on the work of the Panel is received from the panel advisor and submitted to senior managers for inclusion in progress reporting to the members of the Adoption Committee and the RAA Strategic Governance Board.
- The panel receives a broad range of learning and development opportunities to support contemporary adoption practice, including mandatory courses, such as equality and diversity, safeguarding and other learning events relevant to panel activity.

iv) Adopter and Carer feedback on the service:

- Prospective adopters/carers complete evaluation forms and adopters at key points in the adoption process, including those who have attended the information events; preparation and training groups; panel; post placement and post adoption order.
- Regular engagement events are held with Coram Adopters and Adoptive families accessing local authority services to listen to experiences and contribute to the ongoing improvement and development of services.



- Feedback is also received from adopters receiving support from the RAA, which is utilised for development of local services.

v) **Financial and Business Management**

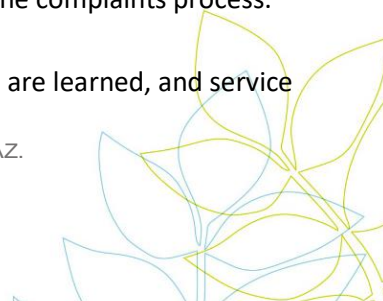
- Monthly finance returns to monitor and ensure that the Service is within budget. This includes statistics in relation to referral and placement trends in order to monitor the ongoing viability of the Service.
- Quarterly reports are made to The Adoption Committee summarising the trends arising from the performance data and practice; planning is then tailored to changing circumstances as required.
- Quarterly progress reports are received by the Strategic Governance Board for the Regional Adoption Agency made up of Director of Children's Service across participant authorities to ensure continuing sufficiency of resource, capacity to meet increased or shifting patterns of demand for the services across the functions of adopter recruitment, family finding and adoption support.
- An Operational group of Heads of Service for participant local authorities is chaired by the Managing Director for the services meeting throughout the year to review outcome against the service specification for the regional agency, key performance indicators using qualitative and quantitative data analysis and diagnostics to support continuing quality in delivery.

vi) **Data**

- Child level data from across the partnering local authorities is captured centrally using a Coram-i developed tracking tool. Local authorities provide Coram with regular updates to ensure the tracking tool is maintained and is a live reflection of the children with a plan for adoption across the RAA.
- Adopter data is recorded in 'Charms', a case management system used to track the number of enquiries received from potential adopters, attendance at information evenings, and progress made throughout the adopter journey. All details of the assessment including timescales are recorded on Charms. This data is used to submit returns to the Department of Education Secretariat as well as other national data collections.

vii) **Compliments/complaints/feedback**

- Coram welcomes feedback from service users on the service they receive, including complaints and compliments. Service users are provided with information about the complaints process.
- The outcomes of complaints are monitored to ensure that lessons are learned, and service



provision can be improved as a result. The Coram complaints officer is responsible for collating the quarterly monitoring data for all departments and reporting outcomes to the Senior Management Team, Audit Committee and Children's Services Committee. The reports contain a summary of any service issues and action taken to resolve the situation.

- Complaints relating to local authority services received directly by local RAA Adoption Teams are managed and resolved through the local authority complaints process. There may be an occasion when a joint Local Authority /Coram response is required and this is agreed by the Managing Director and the head of Service within the local authority.
- The Managing Director has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing all complaints that relate to the service (including informal complaints). They are also required to assess the outcomes of the complaint to determine whether any changes in policies, procedures or working practices are appropriate.
- The Children's Guide has information on who children can contact if they are unhappy about a service from Coram. It includes contact details for Coram managers, independent children's advocacy services for children and the Children's Commissioner for England.
- Coram's Complaints Process can be accessed via: <https://www.coramadoption.org.uk/your-comments-or-complaints>

Children's Commissioner for England:

Office of the Children's Commissioner, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BT
Freephone: 0800.528.0731 <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk>

14. Details of Registration Authority

The Registration Authority is Ofsted whose address is:

Ofsted Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD Telephone: 0300 123 1231

E-mail: Enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

<https://contact.ofsted.gov.uk/contact-form>



Appendix A

