



Statement of Purpose

THOMAS CORAM FOUNDATION OF CHILDREN

ADOPTION AND PERMANENT FAMILIES SERVICE

URN: SC048496

CORAM FOSTERING

URN: SC034087



Publication Date: June 2024
Review Date: March 2025



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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

2. About the Registered Service

The Registered Provider is Thomas Coram Foundation for Children, 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 1AZ.***

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 the London Boroughs of Bromley, Harrow, Hillingdon, Redbridge, Waltham Forest; The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea; Westminster City Council, the City of London Corporation and Slough Borough Council. Participating authorities to Coram Ambitious for Adoption RAA have delegated some of their responsibilities for adoption services to the regional adoption agency.

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

- 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 family finding and matching services for children within each participating local authority in the RAA.
- 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 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.
- 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.

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. To 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 promoted 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 provide information on the early permanence and adoption process to all applicants interested in becoming adopters.
- To provide information to applicants on the children requiring adoption and early permanence.
- To actively recruit adopters and early permanence carers from a diverse range of backgrounds who have the ability to meet the needs of children needing adoption within the regional adoption agency and beyond.
- To ensure adopters and early permanence carers 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 families 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 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.
- Safely commissioning the delivery of services for adopters and children through the network of specialist adoption support services.

Shared Objectives of the VAA and RAA:

- 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.
- 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.

- To ensure that any decisions are transparent and fair.
- Engaging with young people and adopters through coproduction approaches that inform the work of the VAA and RAA.

6. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice are intrinsic to the delivery of the service. 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

Cathrine Clarke, Managing Director of Coram Adoption and Family Services 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 an **Agency Decision Maker (ADM)** for recommendations from Coram Adoption and Fostering Panel regarding the approval of adopters and early permanence foster carers.

Caroline Keane, **Head of Service** for the **VAA**, is responsible for the operational delivery of the VAA, including the recruitment, training, assessment and approval of prospective adopters and early permanence foster carers and the post adoption support of Coram approved families. She is an **Agency Decision Maker (ADM)** for recommendations from Coram Adoption and Fostering Panel regarding the approval of adopters and early permanence foster carers.

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

Sally Beaumont, **Head of Service** for the **RAA** is responsible for the operational delivery of the RAA, including family finding and local adoption support services within each of our partner agencies, according to the individual local authority agreement.

8. Organisational Structure

Coram Adoption Service Management:

Cathrine Clarke	Managing Director of Coram Adoption and Family Services	C.Clarke@coram.org.uk
Caroline Keane	Head of Coram Voluntary Adoption Agency	Caroline.Keane@coram.org.uk
Sally Beaumont	Head of Coram Regional Adoption Agency	Sally.Beaumont@coram.org.uk

Coram VAA Adoption Managers:

Stefanie Ahlemann	Interim Recruitment and Assessment & Duty Lead	Stefanie.Ahlemann@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 Hub, Forward Drive, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 8NT
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]	Nadine Fry	Nadine.Fry@coram.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, SL1 2EL

Local Authority Agency Decision Maker:

Each participant local authority to the RAA has a nominated senior officer with experience of adoption services appointed to the role of Agency Decision Maker (ADM). The local authority ADM's retain a twofold responsibility in relation to adoption (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:

London Borough of Bromley	Richard Baldwin
London Borough of Harrow	Parmjit Chahal
London Borough of Hillingdon	Tehseen Kauser
London Borough of Redbridge	John Anthony and Judy Daniels
London Borough of Waltham Forest	Daniel Phelps
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea	Glen Peache
Westminster City Council	Nicky Crouch
Slough Borough Council	Susan Butcher
The City of London	Chris Pelham

9. Qualifications and Experience of Staff

All Social Work staff and managers in the Voluntary Adoption Agency and Coram Ambitious for Adoption Regional Adoption Agency hold relevant professional qualifications including a: CQSW, DipSW, Degree or Masters level Social Work qualification. All Social Work staff are registered with Social Work England and have an enhanced DBS check.

In addition, the Registered Manager, Caroline Keane holds a level 5 Management qualification as per the requirements under the National Minimum Standards for fostering 17.2

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 is likely to be more information sharing discussions with a social worker or social work 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 meeting. The Social worker makes a recommendation about whether the adoption enquiry should proceed, which is reviewed by a manager. 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, 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 adoptive family. 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 we 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, local authority checks and enhanced 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(s) and prospective adopters will be asked to complete the 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 or under 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 an adopter and foster carer for the purpose of early permanence placements, they will need to complete additional elements of 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. We aim to complete the assessment within 4 months, but it can sometimes take longer, depending on the individual circumstances of the family.

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 to contribute, but they 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 carer and adopter is confirmed the allocated social worker will work with the adoptive family to identify a child whose needs are compatible with the skills and experience of the prospective adopters. Links between the adoptive family and child's ethnicity, religion, language and culture will also be considered, taking into account how the family reflects or can promote this aspect of a child's identity. The allocated Social Worker will support the adopter to identify links with children within our RAA partner local authorities, share profiles of children from other RAA's, and encourage 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 social 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 child's 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 as a way of building connections and familiarity with the child prior to the match being formally agreed. 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 taking into account the child's individual needs identified through the child placement planning process and evidence of the adopters' capacity to meet these needs.

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. 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 parents are dually approved as Early Permanence carers 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 child's 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 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 the family and the child statutory reviews will continue to be undertaken in line with regulatory 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 adoptive family. 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 may go to the adoption panel for consideration. Checks and references may need to be updated as part of this process in line with statutory requirements.

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, 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 do 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 provide advice and signpost to other services, all of those affected by adoption, including, adoptive parents, adopted children and young people, birth parents and adopted adults

Other Support available to Coram Adoptive families through the VAA Post Adoption Support Team 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.
- The 'Incredible Years' and 'STOP' Adoption Support funded 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 'Catch' an online platform of training, resources and peer support and Coram Support Groups.
- Access to Metabolism Based Therapy (MBT) through our collaboration with the Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families. Families can use the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund to help pay for this service.

Coram VAA works closely with Coram Parenting and Creative Therapies, providing adoptive families with fast and easy access to therapeutic support including art and music therapy, clinical psychology and systemic family therapy. The Parenting and Creative Therapies has a broad remit to work across RAAs, schools and community organisations, offering various programmes of intervention, while forming part of a dedicated service of ASF support closely linked to this VAA and managed by the Managing Director for Adoption and Families. All therapists are suitably qualified and are registered with respective professional bodies and the service is an accredited member of BAPC. [Creative therapies | Our work and impact: Coram Group](#)

You can find out more about Coram VAA adoption support services via our website [Adoption Support Coram 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 service 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 it is not possible to match with a Coram adoptive family, they will access an inter-agency funding agreement with the respective local authority partner 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, older children, 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 such as, 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 and Special Guardianship Support fund.

All families within the RAA partnership can also access a range of services delivered directly by the Coram Adoption Support Team, including workshops and webinar series. Families also have access to 'CATCH', an online platform of training, resources and peer support. In addition RAA families can access parenting support via the 'Incredible Years' and the 'STOP' therapeutic programmes and other therapeutic support including art and music therapy and other child and family psychological help via Coram Creative Therapies. Families can use the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund to help pay for this service.

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 and 'Later Life letter' 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 about adoption via:

- [First4Adoption](#)
- [Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies – Page Array – For Voluntary Adoption Agencies \(cvaa.org.uk\)](#)
- [Adoption England | Regional Adoption Agencies](#)

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:

- All Coram VAA and RAA staff receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal. The frequency depends on the needs of the supervisee but is generally not less than monthly.
- Regular file audits are undertaken to ensure compliance and to identify good practice and areas of improvement.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 Adoption and Families and the relevant Head of Service for the VAA or RAA and are acted on and recorded by the social worker in accordance with the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and compliance with Coram's safeguarding policy that is regularly updated.
- b. All safeguarding concerns are reported to the appropriate statutory authority promptly and investigated as appropriate 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 Adoption and Families or Head of Service. Such events, incidents and concerns will be appropriately recorded and reported to Ofsted in accordance with Ofsted notification procedure.
- e. Coram staff located within a local authority setting refer to the local safeguarding procedures alongside Coram Safeguarding Policy that also applies.

III. The role of the Adoption and Fostering Panel

- a. 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 four 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.
- b. 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.

- c. The panel consider all applications for approval from prospective adopters and foster carers (for early permanence) and makes recommendations to the VAA Agency Decision Maker.
- d. The panel consider all applications for the approval of a match between a child/ren from the RAA and suitable adopters. The panel also consider placements for adoption where the birth parent(s) request their child be adopted. These recommendations go to the ADM for the relevant Local Authority.
- e. The panel consider, on occasions 'brief reports' on adoption and fostering applications during Stage 2 of the assessment of the agency has concerns about the applicants' suitability and is considering terminating the assessment. The recommendation is made to the Agency Decision Maker for the VAA.
- f. 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.
- g. The panel consider reports on disrupted placements and advises on lessons to be learned.
- h. The panel perform a quality assurance function, commenting on the standard of reports received and the quality of assessments.
- i. A bi-annual and annual report on the work of the Panel is completed by 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.
- j. 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 Foster Carer feedback on the service:

- a. Prospective adopters/early permanence carers complete evaluation forms at key points in the adoption process, including following information events, preparation and training groups, panel, post placement and following the adoption order being granted.
- b. 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.

- c. Coram is committed to engaging Adopters and Young People's Voices in the spirit of coproduction and in the design and continuous development of and improvement of services to children and families.

V. Financial and Business Management

- a. Monthly finance reports, including performance data in relation to placement trends to monitor the financial viability of the Service.
- b. 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.
- c. Quarterly progress reports are received by the Strategic Governance Board for the Regional Adoption Agency which is made up of the Directors 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.
- d. 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: outcomes against the service specifications for the regional agency, key performance indicators using qualitative and quantitative data analysis and diagnostics to support continuing quality in delivery.

VI. Data Management

- a. Child level data from across the partnering local authorities is captured centrally using a Coram-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.
- b. The RAA commissioned service deploys a senior data analyst to ensure both sufficiency and relevance of data managed and reporting to the Strategic Governance Board of the RAA and linking with the respective LA in supporting their requirements for regular national returns.
- c. 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, including timescales for completion of assessments, attendance at training and access to adoption support.

VII. Compliments/complaints/feedback

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. 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.
- e. 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.
- f. Coram's Complaints Process can be accessed via: <https://www.coramadoption.org.uk/your-comments-or-complaints>
- g. Young people can contact the 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

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

Appendix A

