



This is the May/June 2025 edition of our regular SWAC newsletter. It is for anyone working in or with a SWAC agency to keep you updated with what's happening in adoption in the region and nationally.

The SWAC agencies are Aspire Adoption, Adopt South West, Adoption West, PACT, CCS Adoption and Barnardo's.

Please feel free to pass it on to your colleagues!

### **SWAC Open Sessions**

These are held monthly and are open to anyone, in any role, working in or with a SWAC agency, whether as a social worker, support worker, in an administrative capacity, as a panel chair or panel member – all are welcome! They are also open to social workers in the local authorities linked to the SWAC RAAs.

The Open Sessions are all held virtually via Teams. They take the form of a presentation by a speaker, followed by questions and discussion, so they are suitable for social workers to record as CPD. There is no need to sign up in advance to them, just join us on the day. The Teams link is embedded in this newsletter, or you can email Heather or Becky for it.

We are now recording these sessions, so do ask if you would like access to any of the recordings. We will only be recording the presentation, not the discussion which follows, so attendance in person is still always best.

The programme until the end of October 2025 is as follows.

On **13<sup>th</sup> May 2025**, from **10.00 am to 11.30 am**, **Tam Cane, Senior Lecturer in Social Work and Social Care**, also from the **University of Sussex**, will give us **An Introduction to the AFDiT**, the Anti-racist Framework for Decision making and Transitioning children from minoritised racial and ethnic groups into transracial adoptive families. **PLEASE NOTE THE LATER START TIME!**



[Click to Join - Introduction to the AFDiT](#)

On **17<sup>th</sup> June**, from **9.30 am to 11.00 am**, **Ruth Copson** from the **University of East Anglia**, will lead a session on **Maintaining relationships in adoption: why is change needed and how can we achieve this?'**

[Click to Join - Maintaining relationships in adoption](#)

On **9<sup>th</sup> July 2025**, from **9.30 am to 11.00 am**, **Jane Poore**, a trainer consultant, and **Alexandra Conroy-Harris**, one of the legal consultants from **CoramBAAF**, will present a session on **Adoption with Consent**, often referred to as relinquished babies, looking at legislation, practice and recent case law.

[Click to Join - CoramBAAF legal session](#)

On **14<sup>th</sup> August**, from **9.30 am to 11.00 am**, **Katy Burch** from **Oxford Brookes University**, will share the **Adoption England Evaluation of Family Finding Events** and will lead a discussion on what works in family finding.

[Click to Join - Adoption England Evaluation of Family Finding Events](#)

On **9<sup>th</sup> September**, from **9.30 am to 11.00 am**, **Sarah Johal**, the **National Adoption Strategic Lead**, will tell us about what is happening nationally in adoption, sharing data and trends, and talking about the work of Adoption England.

[Click to Join - National Adoption Strategic Lead](#)

On **7<sup>th</sup> October**, from **9.30 am to 11.00 am**, **Lynn Snow**, a paediatrician, looked after children's designated doctor, and a former adoption medical adviser, will share her knowledge of **Post Adoption Depression**.

[Click to Join - Post Adoption Depression](#)

Let me know if there are any other topics that would be helpful to your practice, or if you know of anyone who would be able to run a session for us.

### **SWAC Best Practice Sessions**

These are reflective sessions for those working in a specific area of adoption work, in whatever role, to meet with colleagues from across the region to share good practice and dilemmas. They are held via Teams every couple of months. These are open

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groups, so you are welcome to come along to any which are relevant to your role whenever you can. There is no need to sign up for them or to book in advance.

We will, as usual, send the Teams links out for each meeting, but they are also included below.

12<sup>th</sup> May 2025 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Panel administrators  
[Click to Join - 12th May - Panel Administrators](#)

12<sup>th</sup> May 11.30 am to 1.00 pm – Those supporting birth relatives  
[Click to Join - 12th May - Those Supporting Birth Relatives](#)

14<sup>th</sup> May 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Family finders for children and adopters  
[Click to Join - 14th May - Family Finders for Children and Adopters](#)

14<sup>th</sup> May 11.30 am to 1.00 pm – Front door, marketing and recruitment and assessment workers  
[Click to Join - 14th May - Front door, marketing and recruitment and assessment workers](#)

15<sup>th</sup> May 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Those providing access to records  
[Click to Join - 15th May - Those providing access to records](#)

15<sup>th</sup> May 11.30 am to 1.00 pm – Panel Advisers  
[Click to Join](#)

19<sup>th</sup> May 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Those working in adoption support  
[Click to Join - 19th May - Those working in adoption support](#)

9<sup>th</sup> July 11.30 am to 1.00 pm – Those supporting birth relatives  
[Click to Join - 9th July - Those supporting birth relatives](#)

14<sup>th</sup> July 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Panel Administrators  
[Click to Join - 14th July - Panel Administrators](#)

14<sup>th</sup> July 11.30 am to 1.00 pm – Those working in adoption support  
[Click to Join - 14th July - Those working in adoption support](#)

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15<sup>th</sup> July 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Those providing access to records  
[Click to Join - 15th July - Those providing access to records](#)

16<sup>th</sup> July 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Family finders for adopters and children  
[Click to Join - 16th July - Family finders for adopters and children](#)

17<sup>th</sup> July 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Front door, marketing and recruitment and assessment workers  
[Click to Join - 17th July - Front door, marketing and recruitment and assessment workers](#)

On 30<sup>th</sup> June from 10.00 am to midday, we will have our **Annual Joint Panel Chairs and Advisers** meeting. One of the topics will be the use of Artificial Intelligence in panel work, with a panel adviser from a London agency joining us to talk about how they already use AI in their panel. Please note the change of date to accommodate our speaker. Other agenda items will be decided nearer the time – you are very welcome to suggest topics you would like to discuss.  
[Click to Join - 30th June - Annual Joint Panel Chairs and Advisers](#)

### **SWAC Management Board Meetings**

There are two SWAC Boards, the SWAC Governance Board and the SWAC Operational Management Board.

### **SWAC Governance Board**

The strategic priorities and funding arrangements for SWAC are determined at the SWAC Governance Board. Board meetings are held every 3 months to include the SWAC Project Lead and the Heads of Service of the participating agencies.  
**The next meeting of the Governance Board will be held via Teams on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> July.**

### **SWAC Operational Management Board**

Membership of the Operational Management Board is for each agency to decide, dependent on the structure within their agency, but those attending are likely to be at service manager or team manager level and should reflect that the work plan for the Operational Management Board will cover all aspects of adoption work. The first half of each meeting is for discussion of general adoption matters, relevant to all

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managers regardless of their role. The second half of the meeting will focus on a different area of practice on a rolling basis.

It is important for each agency to be represented at this Board. Those attending are the main link at an operational level between SWAC and their RAA or VAA, taking information about SWAC back into their agencies and helping to shape the SWAC offer.

The next SWAC Operational Management Board meeting will be held via Teams on **18<sup>th</sup> June from midday to 1.30 pm. The second half of the meeting will focus on recruitment and assessment.**

### **SWAC Adoption Exchanges and Monthly Profiling Events**

There have been further discussions about these events, given the number of children waiting and the continuing shortage of prospective adopters. The decision has been taken to run the virtual profiling meetings quarterly for the foreseeable future rather than monthly. Each event will focus on specific groups of children, and prospective adopters will be invited to attend. All meetings will be held via Teams.

These are the new dates for your diaries! From October, we will also be moving these events to a Wednesday, which seems to be a better day for most agencies.

For the July event, we will focus on children up to the age of 4, whether being placed separately or in a sibling group.

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026

If you would like one of your **families waiting** to attend, you will need to let Heather know by midday on the **Wednesday before the meeting**. A Teams invitation will either be sent to them directly if they are happy for their email address to be shared or to their worker to forward to them.

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Similarly, you will need to let Heather know which **children** you want to profile by midday on the **Wednesday before the meeting**. Just email with the name of your child or children, dates of birth, ethnicity, whether being placed with a sibling and if the child has any significant additional needs.

Those profiling children will be given a time to attend and will have 10 minutes to talk about each child or sibling group. You can share photos and videos, but above all, you need to know your little one. Anyone can read a LinkMaker profile, but what works best with these sessions is where the family finder tells us little stories and anecdotes about the child, their likes, and dislikes, to bring them alive.

The agenda is set and sent out on **Thursday morning** before the meeting. It is important to let Heather know if you had a particular time you would like to attend, to be able to accommodate your request. If you are unable to attend for any reason, please let Heather know as soon as possible to ensure that there is time to rearrange the agenda. **This is particularly important now that prospective adopters are attending, as they may be coming to hear more about a particular child.**

**Do remember that Heather and Becky are always very happy to circulate children and family profiles around SWAC, or to circulate requests for EP placements. Just email us!**

### **LinkMaker**

Becky is arranging for a SWAC tab to be set up on LinkMaker so that you and your prospective adopters can more easily identify the children waiting in the 3 SWAC RAAs.

Whilst it is always important to cast your net widely to find the best family for any child, there are advantages in placing the child with another SWAC agency if you do not have a suitable family within your RAA. From the many years of cooperation and collaboration across the region, all the SWAC agencies work in very similar ways, which eases the discussions, the planning, and the support around a potential placement. Transitions are also easier over a more contained geographic area, as is ongoing support both immediately after placement and Post Adoption Order. The child retains a link with the region they originally came from, too.

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We are hoping to encourage those families finding for their prospective adopters and the prospective adopters themselves to make use of the button to look first at the children in our region in need of a family, before looking nationally.

More details will be sent out to you all once LinkMaker have confirmed that the tab is up and running.

### **National news updates**

#### **Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)**

The changes to the ASGSF announced by the Department for Education on 14<sup>th</sup> April have raised concerns across the sector, and there are discussions in all adoption agencies about how to respond to the changes.

CVAA, alongside charities Adoption UK, Kinship and Coram have written an open letter to the Secretary of State expressing their concern and dismay about the decision, warning that the changes risk significant consequences for children who need this vital support, who are almost all care experienced and share a childhood overshadowed by trauma, loss and disruption. The letter can be accessed by following this link-

[Joint-letter-ASGSF-17-Apr-25.pdf](#)

Adoption England published a statement on 14<sup>th</sup> April on their website about the changes-

*'Today, the Department for Education confirmed a change in the maximum funding available per child through the Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF).*

*Although the total budget for the ASGSF will remain at £50 million this year – which will bring some reassurance to many families – there are significant changes to how the money will be distributed.*

- *The Fair Access Limit (FAL) has been reduced from £5,000 to £3,000 per child, per year.*

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- *There will no longer be a separate allowance for specialist assessments – instead, assessments up to £2,500 can be considered, but only within the new overall FAL of £3,000.*
- *Applications for match funding for exceptional situations for therapy costs above £3,000 or specialist assessments over £2,500 will no longer be accepted.*
- *In addition, transitional funding arrangements that previously allowed funding to be carried over across financial years have now come to an end.*

*These changes are being made to manage growing pressure on the fund, which has struggled to meet rising demand in recent years. The future of the fund had been uncertain until 1 April, when the government confirmed its continuation. However, with a new approach in place, this will have repercussions for local authorities and regional adoption agencies, as well as providers, with some delays for families. Regional adoption agencies are in the process of adapting to these changes, and they would like to provide reassurance to families that they will be in contact to discuss and review arrangements.'*

Sarah Johal MBE, National Adoption Strategic Lead at Adoption England, said:

*“The delay in the announcement and the reduction in the support available for families is disappointing. Many applications will need to be reviewed and resubmitted, and this will lead to further worry and uncertainty and delays for families in accessing help. Many parents and carers of children who are adopted and in special guardianship arrangements are experiencing serious challenges in caring for children who have experienced loss, separation, and trauma, and they need access to a range of therapeutic support. Securing longer-term funding must be a key priority for the government in the forthcoming spending review.”*

Sarah will be joining us for a SWAC Open Session in September to talk about national developments in adoption and will no doubt be open to discussing this further.

### **Planning for Staying in Touch – Research in Practice**

Research in Practice launched a range of materials and resources in December 2024 for use in the training and supervision of social workers and contact supervisors, as well as in the training of adopters in relation to staying in touch/contact after adoption.

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At the heart of these resources is the voice of the lived experience of adopted children, young people, and birth relatives. Their perspectives play a key role in shaping the content, ensuring that the experiences of those directly affected are heard and understood.

All resources are organised into key topic areas to help support important relationships within the adoption journey. You will find research briefings, practice guides, videos, case studies, and reflective exercises organised into key topic areas, and all are aimed at helping to support these important relationships.

#### [Staying in touch: Contact after adoption | Research in Practice](#)

There's an excellent, easy-to-read section with practical tools and templates for you to use ([Planning tools and templates | Research in Practice](#)), with a planning tool developed with Elsbeth Neil, Mary Beek and Julie Young from the University of East Anglia. The tool comprises a six-step approach. It is a dynamic rather than linear process which should be reviewed over time.

#### **Step one:**

What is the purpose of keeping in touch?

#### **Step two:**

Who is important to this child now? For the future?

#### **Step three:**

What are the strengths and challenges for each person involved? Their relationships with each other? What support can be offered to address any worries, keep everyone safe and build relationships?

#### **Step four:**

Provisional contact plan: What is the best way of keeping in touch with this person? How will this fit in with the overall pattern of contact for this child?

#### **Step five:**

Provisional contact support plan

#### **Step six:**

Review

There is more detail if you follow this link-  
[staying-in-touch-a-planning-tool-for-children-in-permanent-families-web.pdf](#)

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Do check it out and share with your colleagues in the local authorities who are making permanence plans for children, including IROs.

### **SWAC website**

We now have a SWAC section on the CCS Adoption website, where you can find details of forthcoming events and other useful information. Do check it out! You can access it by copying the link below.

<https://www.ccsadoption.org/the-centre/swac/>

### **Other useful websites**

#### **CoramBAAF**

Check out the CoramBAAF website for useful information and updates about adoption, and for details of their training events, some of which are free to those working for agencies which are members of CoramBAAF. All of the SWAC adoption agencies are members.

#### **Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA)**

CVAA is a network of 34 independent, not-for-profit organisations that provide adoption services across the UK, including Barnardo's, PACT and CCS Adoption. They have an excellent website and run practice workshops, seminars, training and conferences for their members and non-members. There is a cost to these sessions, but they have an excellent programme. Details of their training programme can be found here-

<https://cvaa.org.uk/training-workshops/>

#### **Adoption England**

Adoption England is a collaboration of Regional Adoption Agencies working together, with a small central team, aiming to improve adoption practice and develop support and services to better meet the needs of children and families. It receives funding from the Department for Education and works in partnership with all agencies involved with adoption in England, including voluntary adoption agencies and local authorities, as well as specialised adoption charities and third sector services.

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The website is a good source of up-to-date information about what is happening in adoption from a national perspective, so do keep an eye on their news updates.

### **Contact us!**

SWAC is hosted by CCS Adoption and is run by a Project Lead, **Heather Freeman**, who works 10 hours a week, assisted by **Becky Hosken**, who works for SWAC for 5 hours a week. Heather's email address is [heather.freeman@ccsadoption.org](mailto:heather.freeman@ccsadoption.org)  
Becky's email address is [becky@ccsadoption.org](mailto:becky@ccsadoption.org)

We are happy to help with any queries you might have or to circulate requests for help or information around the other SWAC agencies or further afield.

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