



This is the first edition of 2026 of our regular SWAC newsletter, and it covers events in January and February. It is for anyone working in or with a SWAC agency to keep you up to date 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 this newsletter on to your colleagues, including panel members and your colleagues in the local authorities in the region.

### **SWAC Survey**

Many thanks to those of you who completed the recent SWAC survey. We had 105 responses, which was amazing and so helpful!

45 social workers replied, 20 managers, 2 administrators, 1 panel member, 14 support workers, 3 Heads of Service, 3 panel chairs, and 17 'others'.

Details of the feedback are being shared and discussed with your Heads of Service at the next SWAC Governance Board and will be disseminated within all agencies later in the New Year.

### **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. These sessions are also open to social workers, support workers, their managers, and IROs in the local authorities linked to the three 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 links are embedded in this newsletter, or you can



email Heather or Becky for the link. Information about Open Sessions and the Teams links is also sent out directly to as many people as possible within all the SWAC agencies.

We are now recording most of these sessions, if the presenter and those attending agree to us doing so. Ask Heather if you would like access to any of the recordings. We only record the presentation, not the discussions which follow, so attendance in person is still always best.

The programme from the beginning of January to the end of April 2026 is as follows.

Our first Open Session of the New Year will be on **15th January 2026 from 9.30 am to 11.00 am** and will be led by **Anne Murphy** of the University of East Anglia, who will talk about some recent research she has been involved in, *'Pre-Adoption Order Disruptions in England: Learning from disruption reports 2017–2024'*. This report sheds light on the complex and often challenging transition period between leaving foster care and a child settling into their new adoptive home. **[Click here to join the meeting](#)**

On **26th February 2026**, from **9.30 am to 11.00 am**, Ruth Copson, also from the University of East Anglia, will join us to talk about her work looking at the experience of birth families from care proceedings to adoption and beyond. **PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE FROM NOVEMBER! [Click here to join the meeting](#)**

On **12th March 2026**, from **9.30 am to 11.00 am**, Emeritus Professor Keith Moultrie from the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University will share the recently published research findings into Safeguarding in the context of Adoption and Special Guardianship. **[Join the meeting now](#)**

On **21st April 2026**, from **9.30 am to 11.00 am**, Dr Alan Price, a Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Salford, whose main research interest is foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), will present a session on FASD, looking at the neurodevelopmental presentation, complications, and support strategies. **[Click here to join the meeting](#)**

I'm also hoping to set up sessions later in the Spring on **family network meetings, and also on education and adoption.**

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Let me know if any other topics 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 catch up on national and regional news, and to share good practice and dilemmas. They are held via Teams every couple of months. These are open 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 up to the end of April.

13<sup>th</sup> January 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Panel administrators

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

19<sup>th</sup> January 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Those supporting birth relatives

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

19<sup>th</sup> January 11.30 am to 1.00 pm – Those working in adoption support

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

20<sup>th</sup> January 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Front door, recruitment and assessment workers

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

21<sup>st</sup> January 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Family Finders

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

3<sup>rd</sup> February 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Panel Advisers

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

17<sup>th</sup> February 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Those providing access to records

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

10<sup>th</sup> March 12.30 pm to 2.00 pm – Panel administrators

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

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16<sup>th</sup> March 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Those supporting birth relatives

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

17<sup>th</sup> March 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Those working in adoption support

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

20<sup>th</sup> March 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Panel chairs

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

24<sup>th</sup> March 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Front door, recruitment and assessment workers

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

24<sup>th</sup> March 11.30 am to 1.00 pm – Family finders

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

14<sup>th</sup> April 9.30 am to 11.00 am – Those providing access to records

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

14<sup>th</sup> April 11.30 am to 1.00 pm – Panel advisers

**[Join the meeting now](#)**

### **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 in person in Bristol on 9<sup>th</sup> January from 11.00 am to 2.00 pm.**

#### **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

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the 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.

Each agency needs to be represented on this Board. More than one representative from each agency is welcome to attend. Meetings are held quarterly. 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.

Meetings are quarterly. The next SWAC Operational Management Board meeting will be held via Teams on **17<sup>th</sup> March from 11.30 am to 1.00 pm.**

Please let Heather know as soon as possible if the date clashes with any internal meetings within your agency, which will prevent your representation at the meeting, to allow time to find an alternative date.

### **SWAC Profiling Events**

The profiling meeting in January will be held as usual, but Teams will trial a different format for this one session. It will be more of an **open information event**. It will be held on **Wednesday, January 28<sup>th</sup>**, from 10.00 am to midday and will focus on **children with known disabilities or health or developmental delays**.

It will begin with an adopter talking about her experiences of adopting a child with additional needs, followed by Claire Downes, from the South West Permanency Project, talking about the support available for such families in the South West. All 3 RAAs will then have an opportunity to profile two or three children.

**This is a unique opportunity for professionals and prospective adopters to update their knowledge about how such families can be supported, so please do come along and encourage your families to do so too.** Any professionals who wish to come along need only email me to confirm, and I will send the Teams link.

If you would like one of your prospective adoptive **families** to attend, either in stage 2 or approved, you will need to let Heather know by midday on the **Wednesday before the meeting, i.e. 21<sup>st</sup> January**. 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 **Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> January**. For this event, each RAA can profile 2 children or sibling groups, so you will need to discuss in your family finding teams which children you want to put forward. Claire and I are keen to have a range of children profiled, so feel free to discuss with us if you are unsure which children to put forward.

As usual, 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. 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 will be set and sent out on **Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January**. It is important to let Heather know if you have 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 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

The SWAC tab on Linkmaker is now up and running so that you and your prospective adopters can more easily identify the children waiting in the 3 SWAC RAAs, and those who are family finding for their children can look for regional matches. Contact Becky if you have any problems accessing it.

Whilst it is always important to cast the 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 own 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

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ongoing support both immediately after placement and post Adoption Order. The child retains a link with the region they originally came from, too.

We are hoping to encourage those family findings 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.

### **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 the SWAC adoption agencies are members of CoramBAAF.

The CoramBAAF Practice Notes series is designed for social workers and other practitioners and gives recommendations for good practice in specific areas. All their Practice Notes are free for members – just sign in to the website, log in and download your copies. In 2025, they published the following (right click and open hyperlink):

#### **Parental consent and children/young people who are living in private fostering arrangements**

#### **Matching children from England with adopters approved in the Isle of Man**

#### **National Minimum Standards for Fostering: Implications for kinship foster care in England**

#### **Matching children from Wales with adopters approved in Scotland**

CoramBAAF have also just announced that they will be holding an in-person **Adoption Conference on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> May, from 9.30 am to 4.00 pm** at Coram Campus, London.

This event will focus on how modern adoption can meet the needs of today's children and today's families. Within this topic, they will be exploring the staying in

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touch agenda, education, recruitment and identity, as well as looking at where adoption needs to modernise to meet support needs across policy and practice.

There are, as yet, no details of the cost, but you can register your interest in the event, and they will keep you informed.

### **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.

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.

<https://www.adoptionengland.co.uk/>

### **Research in Practice**

Research in Practice is a leading research and evaluation provider in Children's and Adults' Services. Their evidence-informed approach is central to research and evaluation, and they weave research evidence, professional expertise and the views of those with lived experience throughout their evaluations. There are excellent resources and tools on the website to help with planning, keeping in touch arrangements post adoption order.

<https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/>

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### **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.

### **SWAC website**

There is 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/adoption-support/swac/>

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