



This is the September 2024 edition of our regular SWAC newsletter. It is for anyone working in 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 it on to your colleagues!

SWAC Open Sessions

SWAC Open Sessions are held monthly (apart from August) and are open to anyone, in any role, working in a SWAC agency. They are all held virtually via Teams or Zoom, depending on the preference of the speaker.

These sessions take the form of a presentation by a speaker, followed by questions and discussion, so are suitable for registered social workers to record as CPD. We are currently looking at whether we can record these sessions and make them available on the SWAC website.

September 24th 9.30am to 11.00am

Sarah Johal, National Adoption Strategic Lead, will update us on national trends and developments in adoption and will talk to us about the national adoption strategy.

October 15th 9.30am-11.00am

Jenny Blackmore, researcher at the University of Cardiff, will share her findings from her research in Wales on pre-meets between prospective adopters and children before panel.

November 5th 9.30am- 11.00am

Dr May-Lin Lui and Dr Amanda Cundy, medical advisers at Adoption West will talk about FASD.

January 14th 9.30am to 11.00am



Lindy Wootton will be presenting a session looking at maintaining relationships post-adoption with key people in an adopted child's life. Many of you will know Lindy from her work across the region, including with CCS Adoption and Early Permanence.

Please let Heather or Becky if you need the link for any of the sessions. Although every effort is made to get the invitations out well in advance of the meetings, it is not always possible. Keeping circulation lists accurate is a challenge, so we do rely on managers within agencies to forward the links to their teams. If for any reason you don't get the link, just let us know and one of us can forward it to you.

Also, let us 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 practices and dilemmas. They are held via Teams on average every two months. Contact Heather or Becky for the Teams link if you do not automatically receive it.

3rd September 9.30am to 11.00am
Those supporting birth relatives

10th September 9.30am to 11.00am
Marketing, front door, recruitment and assessment workers

16th September 9.30am to 11.00am
Family Finders (for children and adopters)

16th September 11.30am to 1.00pm
Panel Advisers

17th September 9.30am to 11.00am
Panel administrators

19th September 9.30am to 11.00am
Those working in adoption support

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20th September 10.00am to 12.00am
Panel Chairs

25th September 9.30am to 11.00am
Those offering access to records and intermediary services

13th November 9.30am to 11.00am
Those supporting birth relatives

19th November 9.30am to 11.00am
Panel administrators

19th November 11.30am to 1.00pm
Family finders for children and adopters

26th November 9.30am to 11.00am
Marketing, front door, recruitment and assessment workers

28th November 9.30am to 11.00am
Those working in adoption support

28th November 12.00 noon to 1.30pm
Those offering access to records and intermediary services

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 by 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 virtually on 13th September – 9.30am to 11.30am

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SWAC Operational Management Board

Membership of the Operational Management Board is for each agency to decide, depending on the structure within their agency, but those attending are likely to be at 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. The first half of each meeting is for discussion of general adoption matters, relevant to all 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 on 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 **17th September from 12.00-2.00pm**, with the focus for the last hour on adoption support.

The one on **10th December will be from 12.00-2.00pm** and will focus for the last hour on family finding for children and prospective adopters

SWAC Adoption Exchanges

SWAC is committed to running 3 Adoption Exchanges a year, either virtually or in person. The number of adopters waiting is currently low, so these events are currently being held virtually via Teams. Dates for Adoption Exchanges for the rest of this financial year are **7th October 2024, and 3rd March 2025**.

At these Exchanges, family finders for children can profile the children they have waiting, and social workers who are supporting adopters waiting also attend, as do prospective adopters themselves. All the SWAC Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) are invited to profile their children waiting, and we invite neighbouring RAAs to join us too.

Please put these dates in your calendars and give any of your families who are waiting for the dates too so they can decide whether to attend. More details nearer the time from Heather or Becky.

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SWAC Monthly Virtual Profiling Sessions

Monthly profiling sessions are held virtually, where family finders in the 3 SWAC Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) can profile their children waiting. Workers in the RAAs and VAAs also attend virtually, to represent their prospective adoptive families waiting. These are usually held on the first Monday of the month.

The next profiling event for children will be on **Monday, September 2nd from 10.00am to 1.00pm**. Remember that the one in October will be an Adoption Exchange involving prospective adopters. Then we will have our usual profiling event for children (without adopters) on **Monday, November 4th**.

The one on **Monday, December 2nd** will be one where reverse our usual format and feature prospective adopters waiting for the children's family finders.

You need to let Heather and Becky know who 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 any additional needs. You 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 Link Maker 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 on the Thursday morning before the meeting and sent out to all of those profiling a child or children. It is important to let Heather and Becky know if you have a particular time you would like to attend, and we will try to accommodate your request.

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!

National Adoption Week October 21st to October 27th, 2025

You Can Adopt is looking for people to feature in a new public campaign for this year's National Adoption Week which takes place from October 21st to 27th in 2024. They want to hear from a variety of different people from different regions, backgrounds, sexual orientations and ethnicities, who can speak passionately about

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their lifelong adoption. Additionally, families/adoptees who are happy to be filmed alongside other significant people such as their social worker and family and friends are also encouraged to take part. Please note families will need to be available to take part in photography and film (in a London location) in early September (exact date TBC) and travel expenses will be covered.

Would any of your families be interested? If so, contact meghan.robinson@adoptionengland.co.uk or adoption@freuds.com

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. Details of their training programme can be found here-

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

CoramBAAF

We no longer have the SWAC-specific sessions with CoramBAAF, but we will still be drawing on the expertise of their staff for information and to run some of our Open Sessions.

Do have a look at the CoramBAAF website, as there is lots of useful information on it including information about their training and events programme. Some events are free, but as all the SWAC agencies are CoramBAAF members, you pay a reduced rate for any which have a fee attached. Some of these courses are currently being offered to members at a discount of 25%. <https://corambaaf.org.uk/training-consultancy/training-events-programme/training-summer-sale-2024>

They have also just published two new Good Practice Guides. **Exploring and assessing motivations to adopt** is available in hard copy or as an e-book. It aims to help social workers better understand and assess motivation by examining four groups: couples who have experienced fertility issues, LGBTQ+ applicants, single applicants, and those for whom adoption is their first choice. It aims to empower workers to explore various motivations, how they may affect adoption success or

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need for support, and how to discuss often sensitive subjects with applicants, whilst also providing thoughtful and analytical assessment. Information about fertility treatments, unconscious bias when assessing LGBTQ+ and single applicants, how to explore a wish to adopt for religious or environmental reasons, and discussion around the importance of expectations of family life, provide vital practice advice.

They have also just published a practice guide entitled **Family Network Meetings in Adoption**, again in hard copy or as an e-book. Family network meetings are an innovative area of adoption practice that can bring many benefits to agencies, children and families. Although family support is used extensively in child-in-need cases and safeguarding, it has been less recognised in adoption until recently. What are the benefits and challenges of these meetings, for agencies, children and families? For agencies now using them, what have their experiences been? And what do social workers need to know to set up and run these meetings effectively?

They have also republished **Adoption Now**. This handy guide presents the law, regulations, standards and guidance relating to adoption today, covering all stages of the process and related information – in easily digested bite-sized chunks. This new edition has been fully revised and updated to draw together all current legislation, including recent changes and new initiatives. Small enough to carry in a handbag or backpack, it provides instant access to necessary knowledge and data whenever needed.

Adoption England

Adoption England is a collaboration of Regional Adoption Agencies working together, with a small central team, aiming to improve adoption practices 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.

More information and details of all their activities are on their website <https://adoptionengland.co.uk/>

Do check out their Adoption Matching Learning Programme. They are offering a number of free bitesize webinars on matching from September 2024 through to March 2025. These will provide an opportunity to learn about a wide range of topics

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relating to Family Finding and Matching. The sessions will bring together practice experience and experts by lived experiences. You can find more details on the Adoption England website, or you can follow this link -

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/cc/adoption-matching-learning-programme-3337359>

UEA/Adoption England webinars

Adoption England has also been working with the University of East Anglia to run a series of culture change webinars. These are part of the '*Maintaining relationships in adoption: changing culture and practice through developing practitioner knowledge and skills around post-adoption contact*' webinar series. The programme of 13, one-hour-long webinars is being delivered by a team of researchers from the University of East Anglia (including Beth Neil, Julie Young, Ruth Copson, and Anne Murphy). The webinar series allows for an in-depth examination of a wide range of topics related to planning and supporting safe and meaningful connections between adopted children and their birth families after adoption. The UEA team are joined by guest speakers, particularly people with lived experience of adoption.

Copy this link which will take you to the YouTube channel with recordings of the sessions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oD-DiUds_vA&list=PLTWMvIIOPdWdKgydd5y_cz8xwhWPuEH8z&index=8

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/>

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. Becky's email address is Becky@ccsadoption.org. We are happy to help with any queries you might have and to circulate requests for help or information around the other SWAC agencies or further afield.

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