



## Continuing our commitment to children

**David Holmes**

Like many of you, I am sure, BAAF has had a hectic time since the last edition of *BAAF News*. Over the last couple of months we have had our Ofsted inspection for our adoption agency in England and our annual on-site inspection by our auditors. At the same time, we have needed to keep on top of the challenges posed by a difficult financial climate and a very active policy agenda across the UK in relation to adoption and fostering.

I am delighted that BAAF was awarded an Outstanding rating in our Ofsted inspection. This is a testament to the hard work of our staff but is also the least that our members should expect, given our advice-giving, training and consultancy functions.

In recent weeks, we have seen the publication of the Narey Report on Adoption. Martin Narey's report is complex and detailed, and makes 20 significant recommendations. The report needs careful reading and is not Government policy in England. However, taken as a whole, it should be warmly welcomed for stimulating further discussion and debate about a crucial set of issues for some of the most vulnerable children in society. For BAAF, the report highlights the following important issues:

- the recognition of the positive advantages of adoption for children who cannot be cared for by their birth parents or wider birth family;
- the recognition that the system as a whole, including the courts, often works against its primary objective of placing children with minimal delay and ensuring that all children who have adoption as their plan are placed for adoption;
- the recognition that there is a much larger number of children in need of a permanent placement than those who are currently adopted – for some of these children, special guardianship or permanent foster care may be the more appropriate placement;
- that extended family and friends should always be considered first when making placement decisions;
- that children who enter the care system generally do well and the image that it is a failure is unhelpful and incorrect;
- that the making of an adoption order is the beginning and not the end of the process; a child's needs do not change just because they are adopted - if they need support while in care, they will continue to need support when adopted;
- highlighting variation between local authorities in their use of adoption. We need to be much clearer about why these variations persist; and
- that it takes considerable expertise, skill and support to work effectively as a social worker and that the profession must be respected for the contribution it makes to the general welfare of society and specifically to those children and families who receive direct help from social workers.

BAAF will continue to press these points and the fact that there is much existing good practice in adoption, in working with Martin Narey in his role as the Ministerial Advisor for Adoption. We all share a commitment to making adoption and other forms of family placement work for children.

## You are not alone

**Nick Dunster**

We live in scary times. Given the choice, if you had to pick a date to introduce an ambitious new set of regulations, standards and statutory guidance in relation to looked after and adopted children, you might not hit upon 1 April 2011. There are currently more than a few financial and structural pressures for the public, private and voluntary sectors alike. Fostering and adoption services were already stretched with numerous redesigns and structural changes looming, even before the new statutory requirements landed on the desktops of managers across England.

The Midlands has been no different to the rest of England in this regard. We hope that BAAF in Central England has been of some assistance to our members in their hour of need, and judging by the high take-up of briefings and workshops on the new statutory framework, we appear to have made a useful start at least. Our aim throughout has been to provide practical and reliable advice, assisting services to meet the new challenges.

One of the most encouraging aspects of the new statutory agenda is the extent to which it is so firmly rooted in research – witness the repeated references to the Adoption Research Initiative ([www.adoptionresearchinitiative.org.uk](http://www.adoptionresearchinitiative.org.uk)) in the new adoption guidance, or the heightened focus upon planning carefully for a child's return to the care of their parents in the new care planning regulations, an emphasis clearly based in the

## Scotland's Adoption Register: up and running

**Matthew Hogg**

Scotland's Adoption Register launched on 1 April, and is now taking referrals. Funded by the Scottish Government and operated by BAAF Scotland, the Register has been set up to increase the number of children in Scotland who are placed for adoption and reduce the time that children wait for placement. To achieve this, the Register is working with all Scottish local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies to co-ordinate a nationwide linking service, conducting the widest possible search of children and families who are waiting for placement across Scotland. The Register also operates a data collection service, and this statistical element will provide an overview of adoption practice and activity in Scotland that has historically been unavailable.

The Register has been launched in two stages: Phase 1 (April–August) has seen a

launch of the linking service, with potential links between children and families being sent out to agencies. This initial phase gave Register staff time to develop processes and procedures for comprehensive data collection. We are now entering the second phase of development, and welcoming Sue Brunton, the new project leader, to the team. Sue will take the reins from the beginning of August and her family placement experience will be important in helping to promote the Register amongst placement workers and engage agencies in the data collection service.

Adoption Register staff will be in touch with all agencies across Scotland over the coming weeks to arrange a meeting. If you would like to know more about the Register, please visit [www.scotlandsadoptionregister.org.uk](http://www.scotlandsadoptionregister.org.uk) or contact us on 0131 226 9279.

## Become an adoption champion

**Jane Elston**

BAAF's awareness-raising Adoption Champions initiative is going from strength to strength. Actress and adoptive mum Clare Grogan has made a film with BAAF to help recruit more adoption-experienced people for Adoption Champions 2011. During National Adoption Week 2010, our Champions did a fantastic job of spreading the word about adoption – from putting up posters to giving small talks encouraging people to think about whether they could adopt. Since the initiative was launched last year, nearly 200 people have become Adoption Champions, but we need even more for National Adoption Week 2011!

Clare, who is also a BAAF Patron, said: 'Adopting my daughter is the most amazing thing I have ever done. The first time I saw her photograph she jumped into my heart and there she is staying. I became an Adoption Champion to help spread the word about adoption and hopefully this video will encourage other people to do the same.'

To view the film and find out more about Adoption Champions, please visit [www.nationaladoptionweek.org.uk](http://www.nationaladoptionweek.org.uk). (National Adoption Week 2011 will run from 31 October–6 November.)

## Bargain book for August



The BAAF bookshop monthly special offer continues to rise in popularity. Orders flooded in for our July title (*Making Good Assessments* on sale for £15 – a saving of 40% on the normal price of £24.95) and we are pleased to announce that our August book of the month will be *Adoption Conversations*, reduced from **£12.95 to just £9.00**. This in-depth practical guide, written by an adoptive parent for adoptive parents, explores the questions adopted children are likely to ask, with suggestions for helpful explanations and answers.

Remember, this fantastic special offer is only available via the BAAF website. And don't forget to check [www.baaf.org.uk/bookshop](http://www.baaf.org.uk/bookshop) every month to discover more discounts you just can't afford to miss!

persuasive and important research of Elaine Farmer and others. We see it as a key part of BAAF's role to make these links – between research and practice, and between statutory expectations and day-to-day practice for the children we serve – and we take that aspect of our task very seriously.

But the only way we can genuinely assist with translating rhetoric into reality is if we hear about the policy and practice dilemmas you are currently experiencing, so please do let us know about how you are grappling with issues generated by the new statutory agenda. How, for example, you're approaching the new approach to risk management in the new fostering guidance;

the steps you're taking to achieve agency decision making based upon a finalised set of panel minutes demanded by the new adoption and fostering guidance; the formats you're developing to meet the new expectations placed upon the all-important placement plan; and how best to tackle the cluster of issues related to a foster carer's terms of approval in light of the recently issued Department for Education clarification on the subject.

Why not contact us? We may well be able to help. Like the words from a trailer to some scary movie – though hopefully delivered in a more reassuring and less threatening tone – you are not alone.

## BAAF rated as outstanding by Ofsted

**Louise Hocking**

We are delighted to announce the outcome of BAAF England's recent Ofsted inspection. Between 10–12 May, BAAF was inspected by Ofsted in our role as a voluntary adoption agency and adoption support agency in England. We received an overall rating of 'Outstanding', along with a rating of 'Outstanding' in every individual area that was assessed.

Our status as an adoption agency and adoption support agency in England is important to us and provides a framework for the wide range of innovative child placement and adoption support work that we undertake. This result is valued by BAAF as Ofsted is the key external mechanism for scrutinising the work of adoption agencies, and it is welcome feedback for all of our staff.

To view the full report, including the range of positive feedback from stakeholders, visit [www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Inspection-reports/](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Inspection-reports/).

## Join the discussion online

**Dan French**

As you may already be aware, we've been using social networking website Twitter to hold monthly online chats on issues surrounding adoption and fostering. The aim of these is to introduce those who are going through similar experiences (or who have already done so) and to be on hand as adoption and fostering experts to signpost users to online advice and support.

We have built a great online community to date and hope to grow our audience via future events. Upcoming sessions will focus on BME adoption (25 July, 7–8pm) and search and reunion (31 August, 7–8pm). To join the discussion, sign in at [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and add "#adoptfosterchat" to the end of each tweet you post. Alternatively, you can follow the chats live on the evening by searching for the above hashtag. If you have any suggestions for future chats, please contact me at [dan.french@baaf.org.uk](mailto:dan.french@baaf.org.uk).

## Available now!

**The New Adoption Standards, Regulations and Statutory Guidance (England): What's new? What's changed?** Nick Dunster

**The New Fostering Standards, Regulations and Statutory Guidance (England): What's new? What's changed?** Nick Dunster



## News from BAAF UK-wide

### SCOTLAND

#### Care and permanence planning for looked after children

A recent report published by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), titled *Care and Permanence Planning for Looked After Children in Scotland*, found that, for the majority of children, it took more than two years from their first involvement with services to achieve an adoption order or parental responsibilities order. This included the 44 per cent of the cohort of 100 who had been identified as being at risk either before or at birth. The research, based on court records, also highlights the number of moves some children experience. Plans are now in place to look in detail at the social work records to identify any common themes in terms of planning and possible delay.

The Scottish Government's response to this research sets out an ambitious programme for minimising delay for children through robust assessment and decision-making processes built on a sound appreciation of child development and attachment.

Recognising that it is not just social work but also health, education and the Children's Panel which play a part in permanence planning, the Looked After Children Strategic Implementation Group (LACSIG), which brings together these sectors, will be supporting the ambitious programme. The aim is that "system" should focus firmly on the best interests of the child and ensure that a permanent, stable home is provided as early and effectively as possible. BAAF Scotland is a member of LACSIG, providing input to groups looking at care planning and the health of looked after children.

The SCRA report can be viewed at [www.sircr.org.uk/lacsig](http://www.sircr.org.uk/lacsig), and the Scottish Government response at [www.scra.gov.uk/home/care\\_and\\_permanence\\_planning.cfm](http://www.scra.gov.uk/home/care_and_permanence_planning.cfm).

## Handbags and hairstyling are a big hit!

Daisy Powling

On 8 June over 200 guests came along to our fifth Bag Ladies event, hosted at Baker Tilly's glamorous offices in London. The night was a sell-out, and anyone who managed to get a ticket was rewarded with an amazing event. BAAF Patron and TV's favourite hairdresser, Andrew Barton, actress Lisa Faulkner and GMTV's fashion guru Mark Heyes were our celebrity guest speakers and helped the night go with a real swing. Over 30 beautiful bags were donated by designers including Smythson, J&M Davidson, Mulberry and Osprey.

Andrew and his team offered consultations, Mark offered style advice and there was a fantastic buzz during the live auction and raffle as guests dashed to collect their prizes! The event was another great success for BAAF and raised over £20,000 for our work with finding families for children in care. Keep an eye on [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk) for news of Bag Ladies 2012 and other BAAF special events.

Andrew Barton, Mark Heyes and Lisa Faulkner start the bidding on the hotly contested handbags



## Form C (Connected Persons)

Paul Adams

Feedback from social work practitioners suggests that the formats currently available for undertaking assessments of "connected persons" (primarily family and friends) have a number of limitations. BAAF has consequently developed a new Form C to establish a comprehensive format that meets the requirements of the tasks, and complies with legislation in England.

Form C is designed to be used in the assessment of connected persons for viability assessments (to consider whether a full assessment should be undertaken), for temporary approval assessments, and for assessments of prospective foster carers and special guardians. The form is also designed so that where an assessment has been undertaken, any subsequent one takes the previous assessment into account, and builds on it. This means that the practitioner will not need to rewrite or repeat information, but will be able to concentrate on assessing in more depth, and for the specific purpose of the next stage.

Initial feedback from practitioners about a draft has been very positive. A sample copy of the new Form C has been sent to all local authority members in England for evaluation. The form will be free to use for the remainder of this financial year (until 31 March 2012) for all local authorities that agree to add it to their electronic forms licence from 2012 onwards. If you would like to see a sample copy, please email [pubs.sales@baaf.org.uk](mailto:pubs.sales@baaf.org.uk).

## Helping you stay up to date

Jo Francis

New editions of several BAAF books have just been published, taking account of the recent legislative changes in adoption and fostering.

*Adoption Now* and *Fostering Now*, our popular pocket law books, have been fully revised and updated. Comprehensive and portable, these reference books cover all the legal aspects relating to adoption and fostering today – an immense timesaver for busy professionals.

*Effective Fostering Panels*, our guide to fostering panel work, has been updated with a revised edition, which will be available from mid-August. This guide brings together the key messages in regulations, standards and inspections about fostering panels for panel members, carers, workers and managers, as well as offering good practice points to agencies.

*Effective Panels* will also be updated later this year. In the meantime, a supplementary pamphlet has been produced that points to legislative changes within the text. Copies of the pamphlet were sent to all recent purchasers of the book and will continue to be sent out until the new edition is published. If you would like to be informed when the new edition is available, please email [pubs.sales@baaf.org.uk](mailto:pubs.sales@baaf.org.uk).



## BAAF conference: Making good assessments

Kay Mirza

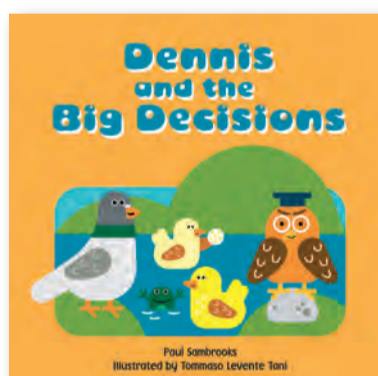
There are thousands of children who require new families. Many of them have had troubled and problematic backgrounds and their needs are complex. Preparing and assessing potential adopters and foster carers is key to a successful placement – but what makes for a good assessment? How can workers ensure that the assessment process is an enabling and rewarding experience for the applicant?

'Making good assessments', to be held in London on 28 November, will explore the different aspects of the demanding and complex nature of foster carer and adoptive assessments. It will provide an opportunity

for delegates to reflect on the nature of assessment and how to involve applicants in the process. The focus will be on well-evidenced and analytical assessments, some of the tools and approaches that can be used and aspects to be considered in assessing applicants from different groups through interactive workshops.

Guest speakers include: Sara Barratt, Tavistock Clinic; Ruth Dalzell, NCB; Jeanne Kaniuk OBE, Coram; and John Simmonds, BAAF. For more details, contact the BAAF Conference Team on 020 7421 2637, email [conferences@baaf.org.uk](mailto:conferences@baaf.org.uk) or visit [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk).

## New from BAAF



### Dennis and the Big Decisions

Paul Sambrook

In this sequel to the perennial favourite, *Dennis Duckling*, Dennis and his sister are living with a foster family, after having to leave their home. Now some big decisions have to be made – where should the ducklings live? Who can visit them? What do Dennis and his sister think about this? Intentionally left open-ended to apply to any situation in which a child may have to move, this colourfully illustrated picture book explains to younger children about why big decisions have to be made, who makes them, and that their wishes and feelings are important.

£6.95 plus £2 postage + packing



### As if I was a Real Boy

Gordon and Jeannie Mackenzie

In this moving account, part of the Our Story series of personal narratives, adoptive mother and adopted son (now adult) take it in turns to relate the story of Gordon's adoption and their life together. Building a loving family was not without challenges – Jeannie was adopting as a single parent, and Gordon, aged ten, had been living in a psychiatric hospital for three years, with undiagnosed mental health issues. But over time, adoption changed their lives for the better.

£8.95 plus £2 postage + packing

## Fostering assessments in Scotland

Marjorie Morrison

Following the introduction of the new Prospective Foster Carer's Report Form F (Scotland) for applicants for different kinds of fostering apart from permanence, BAAF will be publishing an edition for Scotland of *Undertaking a Fostering Assessment*.

The initial edition of this guide was written by Roger Chapman, as a guide to collecting and analysing information for the similar Form F (Fostering) (England), and has proved very popular with assessing social workers. It is primarily based on Section B of the form, and helps with planning and completing a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment. The guide presents a list of trigger questions that can facilitate further discussion and exploration of different areas and suggests how this can be analysed to assess suitability to foster.

The Scottish guide will have two main differences: firstly, a link with the GIRFEC well-being indicators; and secondly, an additional section in a similar format about assessing kinship carers. More information about the guide, including publication date, will be available later this year on [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk).

## BAAF audited accounts

George Wood

At a time of considerable economic and financial uncertainty, it's probably good for members to know how BAAF is doing, and our published report and accounts for the year to 31 March 2011 will be available shortly on our website.

The audited results show three key things: firstly, BAAF maintaining its volume of activity across the UK; secondly, BAAF increasing its modest reserves in-year; and thirdly, in terms of pensions, which is a topic of huge current interest across the sector, BAAF has seen its pension deficit fall very significantly. This has also served to strengthen the BAAF Balance Sheet.



### Achieving Successful Returns from Care

Elaine Farmer et al

Reunification has been little studied in the UK, but given its place in care planning and the risks involved, it deserves greater attention. This research study looks at 180 children, aged 0–14, who all returned home from care in six local authorities in England. It examines the outcomes through a two-year follow-up of the sample; investigates which factors are associated with successful and unsuccessful returns; and explores children's and parents' experiences of returns. Essential reading for looked after children's teams, independent reviewing officers, safeguarding boards and policy makers.

£14.95 plus £4 postage + packing

To order any of the above titles visit [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk) or contact BAAF Publications on 020 7421 2604