



National Adoption Week and new projects

David Holmes

I hope everyone had a good summer. Here at BAAF we are now working very hard on making National Adoption Week 2011 a big success. In her guest column below, Diane Gault, BAAF's Director of Fundraising, Media and Marketing, describes some of our plans for this year's campaign. Every year we try and make NAW bigger and better as we know that it has a proven track record in encouraging people to find out more about adoption and to consider whether they could become adoptive parents themselves. Last year, we managed to obtain some 639 pieces of media coverage about adoption as a result of the week, and we will try to do even better this year. As ever, we are encouraging agencies to arrange local events and publicity linked to NAW and to consider whether you have children waiting for adoption that you think would benefit from being featured in the national media during the week, in partnership with BAAF. Please do let us know about any events that you are arranging and we will ensure that these are featured on the NAW website.

Like other charities, BAAF relies heavily on fundraising to enable us to innovate and to develop new projects. A very significant project that we are currently working on is Placement Activity Days (PADs). PADs will explore and demonstrate the value of face-to-face meetings between prospective adopters and permanent foster carers and children in need of placement. This is a model that has proved very successful in the US but, aside from some pilots over 20 years ago, has not been tried in the UK. BAAF has fundraised over £150,000 to enable us to run three to four events over the next couple of years along with full evaluation to establish which aspects of the US model are directly applicable to the UK. The project has a number of ethical and practice issues to address and requires careful planning and collaboration with statutory and voluntary sector partners. The first Placement Activity Day will take place this October and we are currently working closely with adoption social workers to identify the children and prospective parents who will attend. At the other extreme, we have arranged a number of fundraising activities in connection with NAW this year, including the Big BAAF Bake-Off (see Daisy Powling's feature opposite) and a "design a cupcake" competition for children! Do visit www.baaf.org.uk to find out more.

Finally this month, I just wanted to draw your attention to the leavers and starters column in *BAAF News*. As well as welcoming nine new members of staff in this edition, we are also sadly saying goodbye to three much valued colleagues who have all contributed to the organisation in different but important ways. Cate Walker has been a terrific administrator in our Policy, Research and Development team and is leaving BAAF to pursue a PhD. Trevor Evans in our Cardiff office has been an outstanding Trainer Consultant and is taking very well-deserved retirement – although we have managed to persuade him to remain with us as an Associate Trainer! The third departure from BAAF is Frances Nicholson, Director of BAAF Northern Ireland. Frances opened BAAF's first Northern Ireland office more than five years ago and since then has led our NI work with huge skill and dedication. She is moving on to a social services advisory role at DHSSPS in Northern Ireland and we are delighted that her many skills have been recognised in this way. BAAF is very much the product of its talented staff group and I wish these three colleagues well for the future.

National Adoption Week: 31 October – 6 November

Diane Gault

This year's National Adoption Week is set to be our most exciting ever, and to celebrate it we are inviting people to make short films on what adoption means to them. Shortlisted entrants will be invited to a London award ceremony during NAW, hosted by BAAF Patron Nicky Campbell and attended by BAAF Patrons, our President and supporters.

Our NAW media partners will be *This Morning* and *The Sun*. We will be working with both to find families for children waiting for adoption now.

This year, we will be piloting a NAW skill-sharing event on 27 September. The event will provide adoption agencies with a forum where they can learn from both BAAF and each other, on what works and what doesn't, enabling us all to maximise NAW opportunities.

Finally, our Adoption Champions will be helping to spread the word about adoption – could you be an Adoption Champion? We're not asking you to be an expert on adoption, we simply want you to help spread the word or

BAAF becomes a KEEP training provider

Jeffrey Coleman

In July BAAF, along with eight local authority partners, received some very welcome news in a tough climate – funding from the DfE to enable us to go ahead with a project to roll out 24 KEEP training programmes for foster and kinship carers over the next three years. KEEP – Keep Foster and Kinship Carers Trained and Supported – provides training to improve the skills and confidence of foster carers working with children aged 5 to 12, so placements are less likely to break down.

For this ambitious project, we can count on the support of the Oregon Social Learning Centre and its excellent evidence-based materials. We will also have valuable feedback from the KEEP pilot groups, project mentoring from KEEP-experienced professionals in Dudley, and the already-apparent enthusiasm and commitment of our staff and our local authority partners (three are in the North East and five in London). The first groups should be starting

the 16-week programmes in early 2012 in Ealing and South Tyneside.

Our immediate priorities are organising the five-day practitioner training (delivered by specialist staff who come over from Oregon) for the BAAF trainers taking on the Lead and Co-Facilitator roles, and working with the agencies hosting the initial groups as they identify the foster carers who will receive the training. There are many other urgent tasks to address, including extensive "model fidelity" measures to be built in, e.g. the regular upload of videoed sessions to a website viewed by the Oregon consultant who gives support and advice; and child behaviour monitored via a weekly phone call with the carer. But this is an exciting as well as a complex project. Emma Poole, KEEP Head Facilitator from Dudley, has just given me her first-hand account of the vibrancy and mutual support of the foster carer groups she has facilitated, and the hugely positive impact on carer skills and self-esteem. We will aim to do as well.

Be My Parent online goes from strength to strength

Emily Pearce

Be My Parent's online service is growing steadily. As we go to print, there are 329 children featured on the Be My Parent website, compared to 225 children at this time last year. All social workers from BAAF member agencies can use the online service free of charge to view profiles and make enquiries. A three-month referral to the website for a single child only costs £293 + VAT for BAAF members.

More and more agencies are also featuring children with video clips – currently over a quarter of all web profiles. This figure has grown by nearly 50 per cent since this time last year. Recent BAAF research into the use of

video clips in family-finding (published by BAAF as *Seeing the difference? Using video clips to help find families for children*) found that 83 per cent of enquirers found clips useful, when viewing them on the Be My Parent website. One family said, 'You read profiles and they are a little scary, but when you see the child playing (in the clip) you get a real sense of the child.'

Is your agency making the best use of Be My Parent's service? For information on referral deadlines and fees, and how to produce a good video clip, visit www.bemyparent.org.uk. Call us now on 020 7421 2666 to get set up on the system – it is quick and easy.

The Big BAAF Bake-Off!

Daisy Powling



National Adoption Week is a busy time of year at BAAF HQ and a week when we try to highlight the need for more people to come forward to adopt. Not everyone can adopt, but there are other ways to get involved...

This year we're inviting BAAF supporters to join in a new activity which centres around one of everyone's favourite things – cake! We're looking for budding bakers to get out their mixing bowls and cook up some tasty treats. Would you like to organise a cake sale

share your experiences. We know that you all lead busy lives, so we've made it easy by dividing things up into three levels to match your availability, skills and expertise. Hearing about the direct personal experiences of others has a big impact on people thinking about adoption. It can change perceptions and help someone on their first step towards becoming an adoptive family, or expanding an existing one. This year, we are extending the scheme to

in your workplace or with some friends to help support our work with children in care this National Adoption Week?

For inspiration, check out our celebrity recipes on the fundraising pages of www.baaf.org.uk. Top chef Levi Roots and TV presenter Andi Peters have donated some of their favourite recipes so you can try out their suggestions. Simply choose a day between 31 October and 6 November, tell everyone about it, pick out some cake recipes and prepare for a bit of indulgence. Contact the Fundraising team for an information pack on 020 7421 2630 or at fundraising@baaf.org.uk.

enable businesses to sign up as Business Champions, enabling us to spread the word about adoption to employees and supporting them to fundraise for BAAF.

You can find out more about National Adoption Week and the Adoption Champions scheme at www.nationaladoptionweek.org.uk.

BAAF Annual General Meeting 2011 and Annual Lecture

BAAF's AGM will take place on Wednesday 7 December. Our annual lecture this year, 'Vera, Jane and Margaret two: reflections on the contributions made by women who shaped family placement practice', will be delivered by Barbara Hudson, Director of BAAF Scotland.

Further details, including how to book a place at the AGM, will be sent to members in October. In the meantime, if you have any questions about our AGM, please contact Karen Wilkins at karen.wilkins@baaf.org.uk.

Annual Review 2010/11



BAAF's Annual Review for 2010/11 has just been published. Copies will be sent to all members in the October membership mailing, and the review is also available to view online at www.baaf.org.uk.

The new legislation: how is it working for children?

Kay Mirza

April 2011 saw the introduction of a raft of new fostering legislation, statutory guidance and national minimum standards in England. A year on, this conference will explore some of the issues arising from this period of change and what this has meant for children in foster care, and what challenges this has brought for fostering service providers.

This BAAF conference, titled 'How is it working for children? The impact of changes in law and practice in fostering', to be held on 14 March 2012 in London, will consider a range of diverse fostering themes. It will present speakers with expertise on policy making and practice, including children's experiences of being in foster care and the perspectives of foster carers. Delegates will have the opportunity to network and share best practice with the objective of delivering a fostering service fit for purpose in meeting children's needs.

For more information or to reserve a place, contact the BAAF Conference team at conferences@baaf.org.uk, or on 020 7421 2636/7.

News from BAAF UK-wide

CYMRU

Following on from BAAF's outstanding commendation from Ofsted in our service delivery as a voluntary adoption agency and adoption support agency in England, Ofsted has announced, in liaison with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), that they will be inspecting the role of BAAF Cymru as an adoption agency and adoption support agency.

Although the work we do in Wales is on a smaller scale to that undertaken by our English colleagues, this development will provide the opportunity to formalise our status in Wales, both as an adoption agency and adoption support agency. It will also provide a mechanism for external scrutiny and stakeholder feedback. We have been informed that the inspection in Wales will take place in early 2012, and will keep members informed of developments.

Other news

Trevor Evans, BAAF Trainer/Consultant in Cardiff, is officially retiring on 30 September but we are delighted that he will continue to use his extensive experience as an associate trainer. We all wish Trevor a very long and happy retirement and will be in touch!

BAAF Cymru is pleased to announce the appointment of Roz Waterhouse to the post of Trainer/Consultant. Roz comes with extensive expertise in adoption, fostering and permanency gained in latter years through her role in CSSIW. Roz commences in post on 21 September and is very much looking forward to meeting and working with our members across Wales.

NORTHERN ENGLAND

Across Northern England, BAAF continues to provide a full programme of workshops on topics our member agencies have requested.

If your medical adviser has been appointed recently, we've a special course on 4 November in Leeds, run by clinician Mary Mather.

Panel-related workshops are on offer for new adoption panel members (13 October, Leeds); legal advisors (17 November, Newcastle-on-Tyne); and Chairs and Vice-Chairs (28 November, Leeds).

In North West England, there are still places available on two workshops in Blackburn: 'Good report writing skills' (7 November) and 'Supervising foster carers' (18 November). 'Special guardianship and kinship care' is the topic for a workshop in Leeds on 18 October, and we have an evening legal seminar on special guardianship on 26 September.

Continuing the legal theme, we are running a fascinating conference on contact (2 December, Leeds). You'll hear about recent research both from the UK and abroad on the effects of ongoing contact with birth families on infants in care, on children who are about to be placed for adoption, and on children who have been adopted. This is highly relevant for child-focused care planning and for presenting cases effectively in court. You'll also hear from an adoptive parent and an adopted young adult about the impact of social networking sites on post-adoption contact, and Eileen Fursland, author of several popular BAAF guides on the impact of social networking on adoption and fostering, will explain how adoptive families can prepare themselves to handle contact and the internet.

Foster carers in receipt of housing benefit

Alexandra Conroy Harris

In June 2010, an Upper Tribunal Judge handed down a ruling (*Wirral MBC v AH and Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (HB)* [2010] UKUT 208 (AAC)) that although looked after children were not part of the foster carer's household or family for benefit purposes, they should be counted as occupiers of the house. This meant that the foster child was taken into account when considering whether the carer was in an appropriate size house when calculating housing benefit. This ruling went against Department of Work and Pensions policy, and in October the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2010 were laid before Parliament. These explicitly excluded foster children from being counted as either a member of the household or as occupiers of the house. This means that a foster carer who has been receiving housing benefit will lose any element attributable to providing a room for a local authority foster child.

Some local authorities are combining their reviews of housing benefit entitlement under the amended regulations with reviews of the total amounts payable to take into account the cap on housing benefit introduced in April 2011 and the reduction in the maximum rent for each area coming into force on 1 October. The effect of these reviews has been significant in some cases, with household income being substantially reduced and bills being issued for over-payments back-dated to 1 November 2010.

Various alarming predictions have been reported in the press about the possibility of lower income families being forced out of their homes and towns as a result of these changes. Local authorities and fostering service providers may need to consider the likely impact on their carers, both in order to manage any possible disruption of children fostered and, particularly for local authorities in high cost areas, whether they are able to maintain a sufficient number of local foster placements. Foster carers may be able to apply for discretionary housing payments to cover the shortfall in rent, or, if the welfare of a particular child requires it, placing authorities may need to consider making increased fostering allowance payments.

New and updated BAAF forms

Charlie Hore

BAAF has produced a number of new and updated forms recently, and this short checklist is designed to ensure that you have received everything we have published.

For England, we have produced two new forms:

- **Form C (Connected Person (Friends and Family) Report)** This was offered to all local authorities in England as an addition to the electronic licence – use is free for this financial year, but will cost from next April.
- **Form PAR (ICA)** for intercountry adoption assessments. There is no extra charge for this form, which is included in each agency's licence for the general PAR. Templates for this have been sent to all adoption agencies in England.

For Scotland, we have also produced two forms:

- **Form F (Fostering Scotland)** Templates for this have been sent to all local

authorities and independent fostering providers in Scotland.

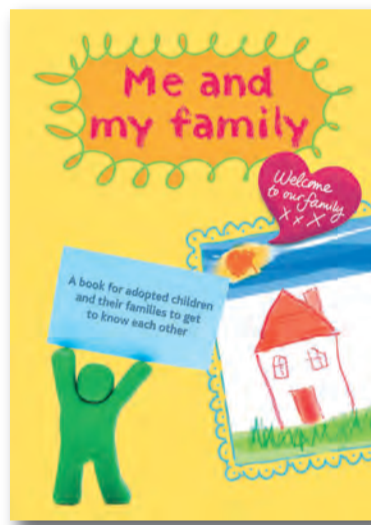
- **Form F (Intercountry Adoption)** Templates for this form will be sent to all adoption agencies in Scotland in September.

In **Wales and Northern Ireland**, we are awaiting legal policy developments which will influence any adaptation of Form C, and considering how to adapt the new intercountry adoption forms.

For the UK as a whole, we have updated five health forms: **Forms AH, IHA-C, IHA-YP, RHA-C and RHA-YP**. If your agency has an electronic licence for some or all of these, the templates were sent in the summer.

If you think that your agency should have had copies of any of these, but has not received them, please email pubs.sales@baaf.org.uk.

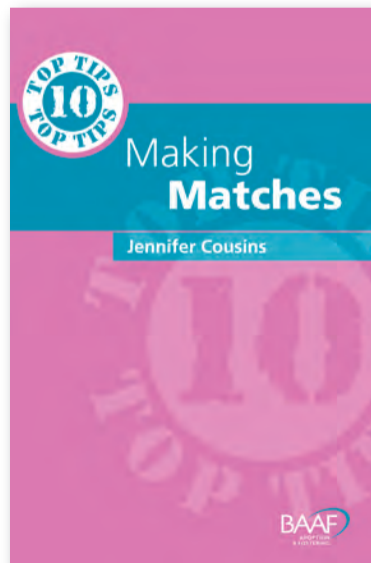
New from BAAF



Me and My Family
Jean Maye

This colourful, beautifully designed interactive workbook will help those children being adopted to prepare for their future, get to know their new family and get used to some of the changes to their life when they start living together. Divided into three parts, the book provides space for both the new family and the adoptive child to write and draw about themselves and their feelings as they are introduced, move in and become a family, including pages for adoption celebrations, new hobbies, favourite things, and new relatives and friends.

£15 (plus VAT) plus £4 postage + packing

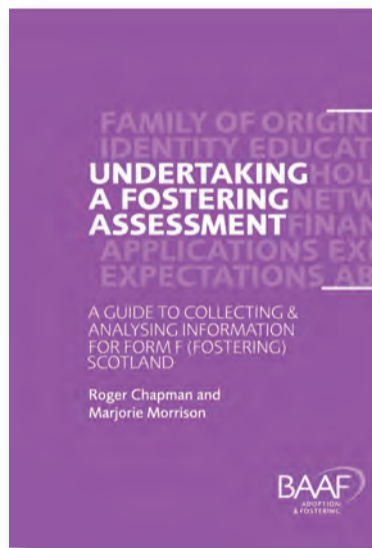


Ten Top Tips for Making Matches
Jennifer Cousins

One of the most far-reaching decisions that social workers make is the selection of a new permanent family for a child in care. But in family-finding, there are no right or wrong

answers – so how can workers try and ensure the best match? This concise, practical book considers the needs of both children and adults and explores how a balance in meeting both can be maintained. Each of the ten chapters presents a basic "tip" in an accessible and straightforward style, including recognising the preconceptions that can dog matching efforts, the complexities of ethnic matching, and learning lessons from disruption. An invaluable guide for all practitioners involved in matching.

£8.95 plus £2 postage + packing



Undertaking a Fostering Assessment: A guide to collecting and analysing information for Form F (Fostering) Scotland

Roger Chapman and Marjorie Morrison

This practical guide is designed to help social workers in Scotland to manage and complete an evidence-based assessment of prospective applicants for fostering, using the BAAF Form F (Fostering) Scotland. The guide is primarily based on Section B of the form, which pulls together information about the applicant. It presents lists of trigger questions to facilitate information gathering and further discussion with the applicant, with suggestions for how to analyse these to assess an applicant's suitability. Cross-references to the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) well-being indicators and BAAF Competencies for fostering are included. Guidance on kinship care assessments is also given. Complete with worksheets to help assessors keep track of assessments, and checklists about safer caring, ecomaps and health and safety issues, this guide is essential for all fostering assessment workers in Scotland.

£8.95 plus £2 postage + packing

Search and reunion through social networking

Julia Feast

BAAF has produced a series of online 'Ten Top Tips' on its Search and Reunion website, for adopted people, adoptive parents and birth family members, giving advice and guidance regarding the possible dangers of social network sites as a way of tracing family members. Making contact with birth relatives can be a complex and emotional process. It is important that people have the opportunity to think about the issues and potential outcomes before they go forward.

As well as giving tips on how to be safe using social media, advice is given on what to think about before making contact and what to do if, as an adopted person or a birth family member, someone is contacted. There is also advice to help adoptive parents if their child is contacted or wants to contact birth family members. Information is also given about how best to trace and contact someone safely and also what your legal rights are.

BAAF hopes that the tips will help everyone involved to be as safe as possible when tracing and making contact, especially when using social media.

The online tips are available free on the Adoption Search Reunion website at www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk.

Can you help? Adopters needed for University of Cambridge study



Can you help? We need to contact adoptive parents for the University of Cambridge's study of adoptive families headed by gay fathers, lesbian mothers, or heterosexual mothers and fathers where the child is aged between three and eight. This is the first UK-based study to include gay fathers and their children, and is only the second such study in the world! It involves interviewing adult family members, and the possibility of a task-based exercise involving the child. No agency files are being interrogated. For further information, contact Laura Mellish, Sarah Jennings or Polly Casey at families@hermes.cam.ac.uk or on 01223 334526.

Staff News

Goodbye to

Trevor Evans, Trainer Consultant, Cymru

Frances Nicholson, Director, BAAF Northern Ireland

Cate Walker, Administrator, Policy, Research and Development, Head Office

A warm welcome to
Elizabeth Bee, Administrator, Northern England

Sue Brunton, Project Leader, Scotland's Adoption Register

Dan French, Senior Media and PR Officer, Head Office

Matthew Hogg, Administrative Co-ordinator, Scotland's Adoption Register

Lynrose Kirby, Trainer Consultant, Northern England

Kathryn Richardson, Social Worker, IRM

Roz Waterhouse, Trainer Consultant, Cymru

Stacey Waterworth, Operator, Adoption Register

Kathryn Wilson, Administrator, Cymru

To order any of the above titles visit www.baaf.org.uk or contact BAAF Publications on 020 7421 2604