



## Working together for children

David Holmes

These are uncertain times for children's services. Following the recent Spending Review announcements, at least we now know the level of cuts that are to be imposed by Westminster on the devolved administrations, Government departments in England and local government over the course of the current Parliament. We all know that these deep cuts will be very hard to find and in-year cuts to service provision are already causing considerable pain. BAAF is taking its fair share of financial hardship too at the moment, and we are working very hard to maintain services to members at the excellent standard you expect, whilst also eliminating all unnecessary expenditure. At times like this, we need to work together to ensure that services to vulnerable children and families are protected as much as possible. History has shown that when these services are cut, the price paid further down the line is always much greater. This is why BAAF will be campaigning over the coming months and years to maintain and develop the highest standards of practice in terms of planning for children in state care and ensuring properly supported placements. Research continues to show that this is the key for better outcomes for children. In these difficult times, please maximise your BAAF membership by using our knowledgeable staff, websites, general enquiries service, publications, training, consultancy and our range of membership services. We are here to help you. We are also currently working on our membership package for next year in order to offer you an enhanced range of membership benefits at no additional cost.

We had a very busy National Adoption Week this year with a high level of media coverage, and we featured a considerable number of children requiring adoption in the national media on behalf of a range of adoption agencies. To tie in with the week, adoption agencies across the UK organised over 80 information events for prospective adopters. BAAF's new Adoption Champions volunteering initiative also went well and resulted in 127 adoption-experienced people signing up to share their positive experiences of adoption within their own workplaces and communities during the week.

By the time you read this column we will be coming to the end of BAAF's 30th anniversary year. We are marking our anniversary with a special edition of our journal, *Adoption & Fostering*, which looks back on the last 30 years of adoption and fostering and BAAF's contribution to policy, legislation and practice over that period. I hope that you will enjoy reading this special edition; our members can access it online.

I hope that some of you will be able to attend BAAF's AGM and Annual Lecture on 1 December. In deference to the fact that many may not be able to come for financial reasons, we are making the lecture available online at [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk). The lecture, to be delivered this year by Jeffrey Coleman, Director of BAAF Southern England, will consider how adoption and fostering have changed over the last 30 years.

In conclusion, BAAF continues to be at the forefront of innovative policy and practice in family placement, and we look forward to working with all our members in 2011. Season's greetings to you all.

## Celebrating our work

Wendy Keidan

BAAF Cymru recently opened its doors to family placement teams, adoption teams and newly qualified staff from local authorities and independent fostering providers to help celebrate the 30 year anniversary of BAAF as a UK-wide organisation. Presentations were given on BAAF's role in Wales today, including information about the work we do with all those involved in fostering and adoption. We also spoke about how we have diversified, particularly in recent years, to offer training and consultancy to those practitioners involved in meeting the needs of all children suffering trauma, abuse and neglect. This has incorporated the coaching and mentoring of child care teams, training of multi-disciplinary agencies including health care professionals, direct work with children, and appointments to chair and author Serious Case Reviews. This extension of service provision has included the facilitation of very successful partnership training on female sexual offenders by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. We informed participants at the BAAF event that we are also planning training to explore the impact on children and young people directly affected by female sexual offenders.

A presentation was also given at the event by Maureen Ingham, IRM Cymru Contract Manager. Maureen gave an update on the IRM, six months on. Membership of the IRM panel is now established, with 29

## National Adoption Week: spreading the word

Esther Freeman

National Adoption Week is over for another year, and what a year it was!

As a result of the campaign, we saw 12,000 people visit the National Adoption Week website, a 60 per cent increase on last year, and a fantastic demonstration of the number of people interested in finding out more about adoption. In addition, around 100 people every day have been visiting the BAAF blog to read real stories of adoption, and our adoption film on YouTube has been watched by over 4,000 people.

As in previous years, we featured a number of children waiting for families in the media. The number of enquiries about the children (via BAAF) currently stands at around 360, but at the time of writing responses were still coming in. Hopefully, through this year's campaign, some of these children will be found permanent families.

We were also delighted to see 127 people sign up to our Adoption Champions scheme, which has encouraged those working in or with personal experience of adoption to get involved and spread the word in their local area. These special volunteers took part in a variety of activities, including organising a lunch with 40 business leaders to talk about adoption, and talks with prospective adopters at local churches. The Adoption Champions scheme was given the official seal of approval by Children's Minister, Tim Loughton, at a special event at the Department for Education.



Adoption Champions Kim, Shegun and Seyi with Children's Minister Tim Loughton (second from left)

Adoption was widely featured across the media during the week, including on *This Morning*, *Daybreak* and *Lorraine* (ITV1); *BBC Breakfast* (BBC1); *Woman's Hour* (Radio 4); and BBC Radio 5 Live. There was also a lot of interest from the national press, including features in *The Sun*, *The Mirror*, *The Express*, and *The Independent*. Regionally, there were many features on adoption in the media, including with *The Glasgow Herald*, BBC Radio Wales and *The Belfast Telegraph*. BAAF's key media spokespeople also gave regional radio interviews for stations as far apart as BBC Radio Cornwall and BBC Radio Scotland.

A short evaluation questionnaire is being distributed to adoption agencies to collect feedback about the week. If you receive a copy, please do complete it and return it to us, to help us improve on the campaign for next year.

## Championing foster carers at the House of Lords

Diane Gault



Lord Herbert Laming CBE DL, BAAF Patron; Sumir Karayi, Director 1E; and David Holmes, BAAF Chief Executive, at the House of Lords

A number of guests attended BAAF's reception at the House of Lords on 26 October to hear about our two most recent fostering projects: *Fostering Education* and 'Someone To...'. *Fostering Education* was a two-year project to create a ten-week training programme for foster carers, focusing on improving foster children's confidence and reading ability. 'Someone To...' was a short project to create a DVD to capture care-experienced young people's views on what makes a good foster carer.

At the reception, supported by IT software development firm 1E, guests heard from speakers including Lord Herbert Laming CBE DL, BAAF Patron, and some of our project funders about why they felt the work was important and why they were motivated to support BAAF. Guests also heard from one of the foster carers involved in the *Fostering Education* project about the impact of the work on the children in her care, and from one of the young people involved in the DVD project. He spoke candidly about how scared he was when coming into foster care and how much support he needed from the foster family to be able to believe in himself. Our guests were very moved by his short speech.

members and advisers appointed to the central list. Systems have been set up to manage the service, including information leaflets, standard letters and website development. The IRM Cymru welcomes enquiries about and feedback on this service to ensure continual professional development.

Judith Jones, Co-ordinator of the South Wales Adoption Agencies Consortium (SWAAC),

also spoke at the event, providing information on the Consortium, which was set up in 2002 and is funded and managed by nine local authorities and two voluntary adoption agencies. BAAF supervises both the SWAAC Co-ordinator and administrator on behalf of the SWAAC management group. During the year ending March 2010, 134 children were referred to SWAAC and 90

## BAAF Annual General Meeting

BAAF's AGM will take place at 4.30pm on Wednesday 1 December at BAAF Head Office (Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS). Our Annual Lecture this year is a video lecture and will be delivered by Jeffrey Coleman, Director of BAAF Southern England, who will discuss BAAF's role in shaping adoption and fostering legislation and practice over the past 30 years.

If you wish to attend the AGM, please notify Karen Wilkins at [karen.wilkins@baaf.org.uk](mailto:karen.wilkins@baaf.org.uk) no later than midday, Monday 29 November.



## Adoption & Fostering special anniversary edition

Miranda Davies

BAAF is delighted to celebrate its 30th birthday with a special edition of *Adoption & Fostering* journal, featuring articles from 18 leading figures in the field. Contributors including John Triseliotis, Roy Parker, June Thoburn, Gillian Schofield, Alan Rushton, Julie Selwyn and Judith Masson join BAAF Chief Executives, past and present, to focus on what has been achieved in family placement over the last three decades. In the current climate of austerity, they also look at some of the many challenges that remain.

Copies of the special anniversary edition are priced at £12.95 plus £2 postage + packing; to order, visit [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk) or contact Publications Sales on 020 7421 2604. To subscribe to the journal, visit [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk) or contact [lubomir.lukac@baaf.org.uk](mailto:lubomir.lukac@baaf.org.uk).

were found adoption placements within the consortium area. (Of those placements, 77 were as a direct result of a link initially identified by SWAAC.) Consortium exchange days are being held every six months and have been very successful – on average, 40 prospective adoptive families attend and all nine local authorities profile children.

## Are you placing disabled children?

Jennifer Cousins

The time has come to update BAAF's list of agencies which specialise in placing disabled children – either in short-term families (temporary or short breaks) or permanent families (adoption or fostering). I receive an increasing number of enquiries to this effect – workers who want to know of specialist agencies in a particular area who might help with a specific child; or social workers thinking of developing a service (short-term or permanent) who just want to share ideas with people who have experience.

I would therefore be very grateful if those already offering a placement service of any kind to disabled children would contact me. Once I have a basic list I will get back to you and ask more specific questions so that we eventually have something useful to share. Please email [Jennifer.Cousins@baaf.org.uk](mailto:Jennifer.Cousins@baaf.org.uk) with details.

## Meeting Children's Needs name change

Jo Francis



The Advice Note *Meeting Children's Needs* has had a name change. Following an extensive update and the inclusion of new material, it is now titled *Children's Special Needs: Some questions answered*. This booklet, designed for social workers to distribute to prospective adopters/carers, looks at the sorts of children who are waiting for new families and explains the extra needs they

may have (behavioural difficulties, attachment issues, physical disabilities, developmental issues, etc). The booklet also describes the different ways in which these children can be found secure placements, including adoption, long-term fostering and special guardianship.

The booklets are priced at £1 plus postage + packing, with attractive discount rates for bulk orders. Visit [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk) or call 020 7421 2604 for further details.

## News from BAAF UK-wide

### CENTRAL ENGLAND

Following the success of our Theraplay training in October 2009, BAAF Central England will again be welcoming trainers from Chicago for a series of Theraplay training opportunities for professionals, parents and carers.

Dafna Lender, Training Director of the Theraplay Institute, writes: 'Why is Theraplay effective for healing children's attachment issues? The key is not the activities. The activities are just the vehicles that facilitate connection. The key is that we lend the child, and teach the parents to lend their child, our whole selves to help them organise into healthier, happier people.'

Using the model of the healthy parent-infant experience, Theraplay focuses on bringing the parent/carer and child together to give them an active, here-and-now experience of a new way of relating. By promoting interaction in ways that foster attachment, the relationships between adult and child can be enhanced and the child begins to feel more secure.

Parents and carers who attended our two-day training last year told us it was a valuable experience, empowering them by providing background knowledge and skills to more effectively support their children. Professionals attending the four-day introductory training, including the Marshack Interaction Method, reported that the training helped them to assess the needs of children and support their carers with practical ideas. The training provides a stimulating mix of theory and practice and the opportunity to think about its application for specific needs, including living and working with disabled children and adolescents.

For more information about these training opportunities taking place between 9–17 February 2011, visit [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk) or email [berni.stringer@baaf.org.uk](mailto:berni.stringer@baaf.org.uk).

## Are you making good assessments?

Kay Mirza

Many children who need new families have had troubled and problematic backgrounds, and their needs are complex. Preparing and assessing potential adopters and foster carers for these children is key to a successful placement. But what makes for a good assessment? And how can workers ensure that the assessment process is an enabling and rewarding experience for the applicant?

The BAAF conference, 'Making good assessments', to be held on 17 March 2011 in London, 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 when assessing applicants from different groups through interactive workshops. Guest speakers include: Sara Barratt, Tavistock Clinic; Pat Beesley, BAAF; Ruth Dalzell, NCB; Jeanne Kaniuk OBE, Coram; and John Simmonds, BAAF.

The revised and extended edition of BAAF's popular guide, *Making Good Assessments*, by Pat Beesley, will also be launched at the conference.

For more details or to register a booking, contact the 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).

## Announcing a new resource on the Adoption Search Reunion website

Julia Feast

We are delighted to announce that in September we launched 'Tracing birth relatives: a practical guide for adopted people' on the Adoption Search Reunion website.

This new and comprehensive addition is intended to help adopted people locate birth relatives. The step-by-step guide explains what information adopted people need to start their search and shows how they can use public records such as the Electoral Register and Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages to find the current whereabouts of birth relatives. The guide also emphasises the importance of using an intermediary when making contact with birth relatives and discusses the potential risks involved in using social networking websites to trace relatives. The guide will also be useful for other groups such as post-care adults who are trying to find relatives they have lost touch with.

The free guide can be downloaded from the ASR website, at [www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk/contact/searching/](http://www.adoptionsearchreunion.org.uk/contact/searching/). We are very pleased to be able to offer this addition to the range of information and advice already available on the ASR website.

## And the winners are...

There were a lot of questions in our recent corporate membership survey. We'd like to thank every member who took time out of their busy schedule to complete the questionnaire and let us know what they think about the services BAAF offers. It's been a great help to us and we hope the lessons we take from it will benefit all members in the future.

As promised, we put the names of all members who identified themselves in a hat, and pulled out two for special rewards – BAAF book tokens valued at £60 and £40. The winners are:

- First prize: Pathway Care, Cardiff
- Second prize: Health Service Executive North East, Navan, Ireland

Congratulations to them both.

## BAAF archive tells history of organisation

Katrina Wilson

In this 30th anniversary year, I'd like to remind people that papers charting BAAF's earliest origins as the Standing Conference of Societies Registered for Adoption, and events leading to the merger of the Association of British Adoption and Fostering Agencies (ABAF) and the Adoption Resource Exchange (ARE), which formed BAAF on 3 November 1980, are held in the Archives of the London School of Economics (LSE). The records, which include minutes and papers from advisory committees, working groups, projects and conferences, as well as correspondence and annual reports, also reflect BAAF's involvement in the development of modern adoption policies and children's legislation. Anyone wishing to consult BAAF's archive can find details about access and visiting times on the LSE website at [www.lse.ac.uk/library/archive/](http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/archive/).

## Staff News

### Goodbye to

Baiba Skujevska, IRM Administrative Assistant

Pat Beesley, Trainer Consultant, Northern England

### A warm welcome to

Mary Bolland, PA/Administrator, Policy, Research and Development, Head Office

## A merry Christmas from BAAF!

Daisy Powling



This year, why not support BAAF when you send your Christmas cards? We have two lovely designs on offer at a fantastic price. Choose between *Winter perch*, with the ever popular Christmas robin, and the classic *Manger scene*. We're very pleased to be able to offer BAAF supporters the special price of just £2 per pack of ten cards (plus postage).



To order your cards, either visit [www.baaf.org.uk/bookshop](http://www.baaf.org.uk/bookshop) or call Daisy on 020 7421 2630. Remember to give yourself enough time to catch the last posting date for Christmas!

## New from BAAF

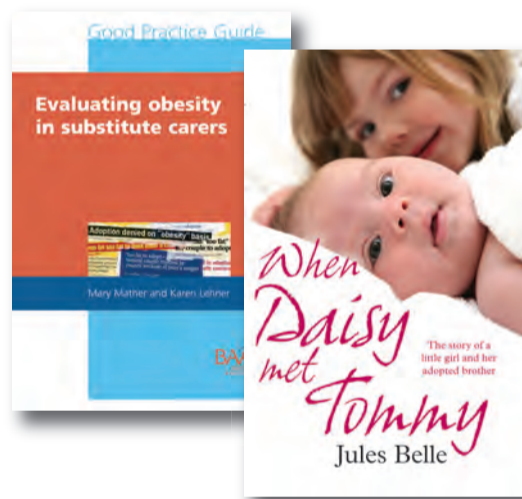
### Evaluating Obesity in Substitute Carers

Mary Mather and Karen Lehner  
£3.95 plus £1 postage + packing

### When Daisy met Tommy

Jules Belle  
£8.95 plus £2 postage + packing

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



## New fees for intercountry adoptions

Alexandra Conroy Harris

The Department for Education is to begin charging a fee to people applying to adopt a child from overseas. From 1 April 2011, a flat fee of £1,775 will be charged to applicants in England and Wales (Scotland and Northern Ireland are subject to different legislation and the charges do not apply to applicants from these areas).

There will be a simple means test, so adopters earning less than £25,000 between them will be exempt from the fee and those earning between £25,000 and £45,000 will pay half of the fee. Applications received before 1 April 2011 will not be subject to any charge.

There will also be an exemption from the fee for applicants wishing to adopt a close relative from overseas.

The Department was given the power to charge for the work that they do in checking and certifying the approval of adopters in intercountry adoption cases in the Children

and Adoption Act 2006, which inserted s91A into the Adoption and Children Act 2002. This section was brought into force on 28 October 2010, the Department having decided that the service was properly established and providing a service to prospective adopters. They are now able to say that the majority of cases are dealt with within 12 weeks and that the current economic climate requires service users to meet the cost of this service.

This fee is charged by the Department for Education and is separate from and additional to the agency fees for assessment and approval (which can be between £3,000 and £6,000), the fees of the overseas agencies involved (which vary depending on the country, but are likely to be over £10,000), and legal fees. This new fee represents a significant additional cost to be taken into account by prospective adopters considering adoption of a child from overseas.