

Commissioning Services

In addition to the menu of core services provided by VAAs to the families and children where they were involved in the placement, many VAAs are able to support Trusts in meeting their statutory responsibilities by:

- contracting to provide additional services for adoptive families already known to the VAA, and/or
- contracting to provide specific services for other adoptive families referred by the Trust.

These may include:

- Life story work
- Managing supervised contact
- Parenting skills training for adopters
- Access to Information/ Intermediary Services
- Independent counselling for adoptive parents
- Counselling adopted adults
- Independent counselling for birth parents/relatives
- Assessing Special Guardians or Kinship Carers/Adopters

These services may be commissioned from VAAs by Trusts on an individual basis.

What is CVAA UK?

CVAA UK was established in 1993 as an organisation representing voluntary adoption agencies. Its aims are:

- To maximise the contribution of Voluntary Adoption Agencies by influencing policy and practice of Adoption in the UK at National, Regional and Local levels.
- To directly increase the number of children successfully placed for adoption by promoting liaison and collaborative partnership working practices between voluntary adoption agencies and all other stakeholders.
- To develop standards of excellence in all matters relating to adoption good practice and management throughout the voluntary sector.

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Registered Company No: 5275491

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Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies

Post Adoption Support

Why Voluntary Adoption Agencies?

The Voluntary Adoption sector has an established reputation of developing and providing high quality adoption support services and members in Northern Ireland have a track record of collaborating with Trusts in meeting their responsibilities under the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987. Over the years we have worked with Trusts to place children with the greatest needs.

We have also:

- been totally committed to maintaining placements with lifelong support,
- worked in long standing partnerships with service users to develop the services they need,
- gathered evidence from service users of the value to them of accessing services from agencies they know and who know about them,

Why do Voluntary Agencies provide adoption support services?

- Many prospective adopters choose to work with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) because they believe they are likely to receive high quality support services.
- VAAs specialise in placing 'looked after' children who are likely to have ongoing needs.
- Trusts are buying tried and tested support services through the adoption support module
- Adopters and young people frequently tell us they wish to access services from the agency that knows them and their history.

Whilst many adoption agencies may place children with relative ease, maintaining children in families and promoting healthy development is much more difficult. If VAAs do not offer ongoing support, demands on stretched Trust services will inevitably escalate. Since many children are placed out of their 'home' Trust, the VAA services benefit not only the child and adopters, but also provide support which relieves the pressures on both sending and receiving Trusts.

Post Adoption Support

This module covers a range of core services provided directly by CVAA UK agencies, including:

- Initial referral point offering rapid response.
- Telephone/postal advice/email information service.
- Specialist assessment informed by prior knowledge of child and family.
- Short term specialist interventions, usually up to 3 visits/meetings, e.g. revisiting life story work/ contact/ attachment issues/challenging behaviour/events in the birth and adoptive family.
- Assistance with letterbox contact system, as and when appropriate. This may include administrative support, recording and monitoring, liaising regarding contact, e.g. advice on writing letters, help in renegotiating level of contact etc.

- Counselling e.g. preparation for tracing, intermediary services, reunion and post reunion support.
- Access to workshop/support groups for members of adoptive families
- Access to/information about resources such as videos, books and specialist services.
- Opportunities for networking with other adoptive families, including social events for adoptive families.
- Referral on to specialist local Psychological/Educational/CAMHS and Medical services.
- Liaising with Trusts and schools to facilitate obtaining appropriate resources.

Individual families, adopted children and adults may use some or all of these services at different times in their lives. At the time of the adoption it is not known what services will be required in the future.

How much does it cost?

- 1/6th of the current CVAA UK interagency fee.
- This fee is paid for each child placed, i.e. the same level of fee for each child in a sibling group.
- The fee is payable at the time the Adoption Order is granted.

- This is a flat fee, and entitles the adopted child and his/her adoptive parent/s to access services indefinitely.

This contributes towards the VAA costs of providing a global adoption support service for which the adoptive families, adopted children and adults are not charged a fee.

Why is the CVAA UK post adoption support fee necessary?

- Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) recognise that adoption has long term implications for all parties, and that adopted children and their parents are likely to need support at different stages of life. VAAs have therefore been innovative in developing support services, funded in the past from voluntary income. As demand and complexity have increased, so too have costs, making it impossible to continue to provide the services from voluntary income alone, although many agencies continue to subsidise these services.
- Since 2007 in Northern Ireland VAAs have ensured the continued availability of these vital services through charging the post adoption module fee on all new placements.
- The Post Adoption Support Module is a one-off fee; payable at the time the Adoption Order is made. This fee purchases support services for the children concerned and their adoptive families on an indefinite basis. It enables the VAAs to provide a range of services that are available at time of need.
- If VAAs were not able to charge this fee, they would not be able to provide ongoing support services to the children they place. All adopted children and their families are likely to have additional support needs at different times in their lives.

What people say

"[VAAs] give a service of very high quality and are always extremely helpful to this agency. The experience and professionalism of their workers is much appreciated."

Service User
Local Authority

"It has been a wholly positive experience - the support our social worker has given us through introductions and especially the meeting with the birth mother has been amazing"

Adoptive Parents

"The social worker I met remembered me being placed with my adoptive family! It made me feel like I was talking to a relative who was telling me about my family history. It was good talking all this through with people who knew me and my family"

Adopted young person