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The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
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Please respond to:  
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Via email

17<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

**Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies**

We are writing on behalf of all CVAA members to offer our sincere congratulations on your appointment to one of the most important positions in government, supporting the next generation of children and young people to fulfil their potential.

The Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA) is the UK-wide membership body for voluntary adoption agencies, who provide 20% of all placements in England with particular expertise in placing older children, those in sibling groups, of BAME heritage or with a disability. VAAs have long been at the leading edge of adoption practice and have developed many of the adoption support and placement options which are now considered mainstream. VAAs are not-for-profit organisations which continue to innovate and provide a lifelong commitment to the families they support. In 21/22 VAAs raised over £1m in additional charitable funds to support adoptive families.

We are delighted that the Conservative government included adoption as a manifesto commitment and we look forward to working with you to achieve our common ambitions of reducing waiting times for children and recruiting the adopters needed to provide forever homes for those who cannot live with their birth families.

CVAA has a long history of working in partnership with successive governments and local children's services using our strong links across communities to recruit more adopters and find families for children waiting the longest. However, the development of the regional reform programme has caused considerable disruption over the past three years and, although there are positive relationships being established in some areas, there is an ongoing need for the government to promote collaborative structures through which RAAs and VAAs can play to their strengths, build trust and work together in the best interests of children and families.

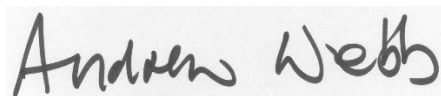
We believe that the structures and decision-making processes for adoption and other care placements require urgent review and would ask you to ensure this is considered as a priority in the Government's response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. The numbers of children with adoption as their permanency plan has reduced significantly over the past few years, a fall not fully explained by the rise in kinship care placements (which we very much welcome where they are the best plan for the child). Adoption will only be right for a small number of children entering the care system however, we are concerned that many children who could benefit from the excellent outcomes adoption delivers are currently being denied this opportunity and instead are going into long term foster care. This does not provide the lifetime support of an adoptive family and is increasing the pressure when foster care has a crisis in recruitment. We would urge you to ensure that the Department investigates what is happening to these children as a matter of urgency, as part of your reform agenda for children's social care.

Clearly these are difficult times for all public services when value for taxpayers and the importance of investing in what works are even more important. CVAA will shortly be launching a comprehensive research report outlining the social return on investment achieved by adoption, which is substantial, in terms of the benefits to children, the wider community and public purse. We will ensure that you and your officials receive an early copy and would welcome a meeting to discuss the report's findings and ideas on how CVAA can support you in ensuring more children can benefit from adoption.

CVAA members have welcomed the resources the Government has committed to a national adopter recruitment campaign and the positive announcement on the continuation of the Adoption Support Fund (ASF). VAAs are working constructively with statutory partners to improve joint working across the adoption system and with other key services such as education, where the trauma informed approaches pioneered in adoption have the capacity to transform the achievements of many more children who struggle in school because of their difficult start in life.

Once again, many congratulations on your appointment and we look forward to meeting and working with you in the months and years ahead.

With our best regards,



**Andrew Webb**  
Chair of Trustees  
CVAA



**Maggie Jones**  
CEO  
CVAA