

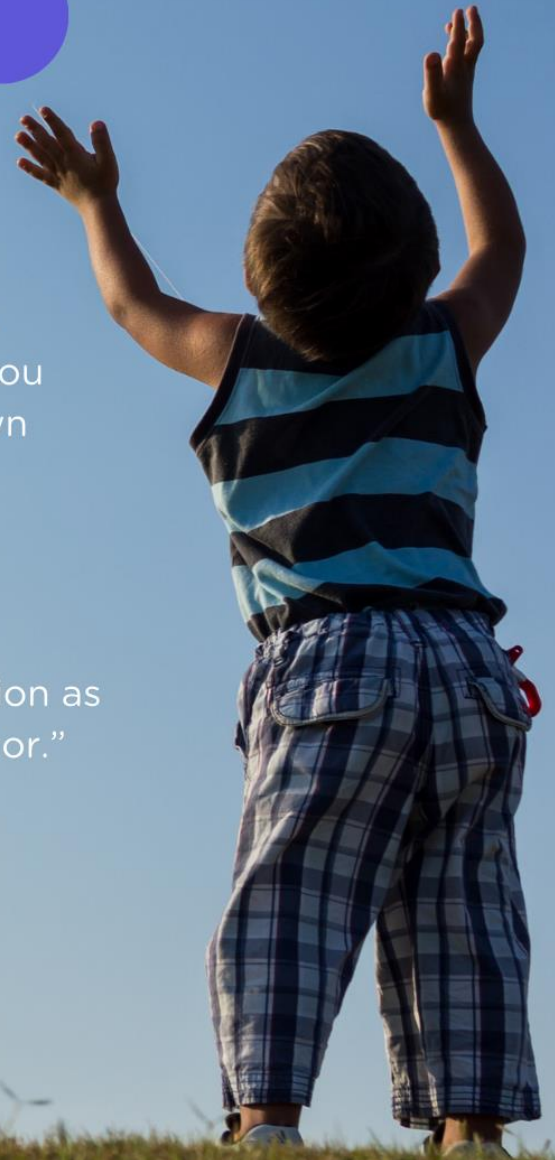
30 Years of Action on Adoption A Brief History of the CVAA

October 2023

Norman G. Goodwin, CBE

“CVAA exists to connect VAAs together, for mutual support and to ensure the great work you do is shared for the benefit of children, our own sector and wider children’s services.”

“The real strength of CVAA lies in its position as the collective voice of the voluntary sector.”



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Foreword from Andrew Webb

The world of adoption has seen some seismic shifts in the past 30 years: Prime Ministers' interest has waxed and waned; central and local government have wrought havoc with changes to legislation, regulation, policy and practice; the courts have, as ever, followed their independent path. But there has been at least one constant: adoption has continued to provide, evidentially and unequivocally, a pathway to permanence and successful adulthood for some of the nation's most disadvantaged children.

Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) have a long history of championing children; of finding innovative means to achieve successful ends and of securing permanence and supporting families in the long term when the State has struggled. Their specialist perspective has supported ways of finding and using data to help the wider system focus on what is important. But, as events continue to remind us, they are relatively small, vulnerable organisations.

CVAA was formed to harness collective wisdom and to present a consistent, value-driven approach to what has become an increasingly fragmented statutory sector. It has contributed to the development and implementation of some of the most successful system changes of the past 30 years; its members have been consistent in offering practical solutions to complex problems and have been endlessly willing to innovate and adapt in the interests of children and families.

Norman Goodwin has been a key player throughout this period and has drawn on his memories and those of many of the other architects of modern adoption to produce this history. My heartfelt thanks go to Norman for the time he has devoted to both researching and writing this history, and for all the contributions he has elicited from his fellow travelers over the years. The result is, in part, a collective memory which celebrates past achievements, but it also serves to remind us of the lessons of history, demonstrating the power of collective action as an effective force for change.

Andrew Webb

Chair of the CVAA Board of Trustees
October 2023



Chapter 1

In the Beginning



Chapter 1 - In the Beginning

Before any birth there is a period of gestation. The origins of the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies (CVAA) were no different.

CVAA was formally established in January 1993, but before that there were a number of meetings which took place to facilitate its birth.

1980's

During the 1980's all Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) were members of the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF). Each agency had a link person and the sector was represented on the board of BAAF by sectoral and regional representatives. Some areas of the country had also already established regional consortia including Merseyside and Manchester.

The Reimbursement of Costs Scheme was established as early as 1978 to encourage interagency cooperation in the placement for adoption of children with special needs. This recognised that VAAs had moved increasingly from the placement of infants 'relinquished' by birth parents, to the placement of children in the care of Local Authorities (LAs).

A standard rate of reimbursement, based on an independent study carried out by the Warwick Business School of the average costs involved in family finding, preparation and placement work at that time was agreed with the Association of County Councils, Association of Metropolitan Local Authorities, the Consortium of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and BAAF.

The aim was that the payment would meet most - if not all - of the cost to the agency of finding and preparing a family for a "special needs" child from another agency. 'Special needs' was a broad term which at that time typically referred to children deemed to have a physical or mental disability, and this marked the beginning of VAAs being seen as experts in finding homes for children with complex needs.

In 1992, a steering group of voluntary agency representatives was established.

Members were:

- Nigel Bennett (Barnardo's, Chair)
- Norman Goodwin (Chester Diocesan Adoption Services)
- Jeanne Kaniuk (Coram)
- Canon Chris Fisher (CCS Nottingham)
- David Bennington (Independent Adoption Service)
- Alison Williams (National Children's Home)
- Paul Greenhalgh (Durham Diocesan Family Welfare Council)
- Sarah Davies (Barnardo's)

On the 3rd November 1992, a decision was reached by the group that VAAs should set up a consortium, with a steering group who would lead work on its behalf. It was proposed that the Consortium should include all VAAs engaged in adoption with the larger national organisations supporting and leading on behalf of the smaller agencies. The initial focus was to:

- Establish a constitution and set of activities for the Consortium
- Drive work on increasing the inter-agency fee to a more realistic level
- Develop a policy for children under 1
- Draw up an inter-agency agreement form

41 invitations were sent to all the agencies (see Note 1) involved at that time to join CVAA with only six indicating an intention not to join at the inaugural meeting held at Coram on the 10th of March 1993. Three of the agencies responding had extraordinary reasons not to join due to their unique service circumstances.

So, with an overwhelmingly positive response the new Consortium was launched, a constitution was drawn up and CVAA came into being. A strong motivation for the creation of CVAA was the failure of the Inter Agency Reimbursements of Costs Scheme (IROCS) to agree a working interagency fee (IAF) for 1993-94.

An interagency fee of £10,026 took effect on 1 April 1993 with an agreement that there would be increases linked to a mid-point on the NJC social workers salary scale so that the fee would increase proportionally with salary costs.

And so, the journey began...



Chapter 2

1993 to 1999: CVAA Established



Chapter 2

1993 to 1999: CVAA Established

The first General Meeting took place on the 10th March 1993. Those in attendance were informed about the agencies who were willing to become members of the Consortium, the ongoing wish for continued dialogue with the local authority groupings and the progress that had been made on the constitution. A £50 membership fee was agreed per agency and an election took place to form the Consortium Committee.

Nigel Bennet was elected Chair and Chris Fisher, Alison Williams, Norman Goodwin, Jeanne Kaniuk, Paul Greenhalgh and Sue Seabrook were all elected to the committee. David Bennington was co-opted to continue the work on the inter-agency financial contract that he had initiated.

Priorities

A small working group was set up to consider placement costs for children under 12 months. Other outstanding issues included local service agreements, future negotiations, partnership with the two Scottish agencies and liaison with BAAF on inter-agency forms.

A post-adoption module group was set up during 1994 with the aim of producing a background paper and proposals for developing an additional element of the IAF. This was deemed to be particularly important as agencies recognised the need for ongoing support services for adoptive families, but also the costs of providing counselling to those who had lost children to adoption in earlier years, and adult adoptees who sought access to their records.

From 1998, momentum on data gathering started to increase. In addition to the gathering of data to inform public debate and influence policy at a national level (*Children Adopted from Care: An Examination of Agency Adoptions in England 1996 - Giles Ivaldi published by BAAF*), CVAA wanted to look at counselling services for pregnant women, recruitment of families from a range of ethnic backgrounds, the variation in referrals from different local authorities, numbers of placements and outcomes including disruption rates, the delay between referral and placement and the size of the pool of waiting families.

CVAA carried out a pilot study involving seven agencies all with over 25 years adoption experience. The pilot was designed to test potential data gathering questions and the usefulness of the collation of national figures. It covered adoption, foster care, finances, staffing, training and research involvement. The pilot was carried out from 1 April 97 to 31 March 1998. Some of the notable results were as follows:

- 3430 initial enquiries
- 10% resulted in formal applications

- 8% were single applicants
- 5% included applicants from minoritised ethnic backgrounds
- 189 approvals with 7% being single applicants
- 7% of those approved already had a previous child placed
- 2272 children were referred to the agencies with 491 of those children being placed by VAAs.
- 106 children were placed as part of a sibling group.
- 39 of the children were from a minoritised ethnic background.
- 167 adoption orders were granted and 288 children were in their adoptive placements but awaiting an order

Delay was already a recognised phenomenon.

These early figures outline CVAA's desire to produce robust, accurate data to inform policy makers and government.

CVAA's commitment to producing annual sector led statistics was pioneering and paid dividends for the sector a number of years down the line. In 1999, the first full set of statistics resulted in the production of the first CVAA data report "The Contribution of Voluntary Adoption Agencies 1998/99".

During that period the CVAA had 29 members who made a £2.5 million contribution to adoption provision from their voluntary funding. In addition, the data showed:

- 516 families were approved to adopt
- 224 (43%) were approved for siblings
- 45 (9%) were single
- 509 children were placed for adoption
- Over half the children (263 - 52%) were aged between 1 and 5
- 250 were placed with siblings
- 97 (19%) had a minoritised ethnic background
- 110 had some form of disability
- 434 Adoption Orders were granted
- There were 29 disruptions with 14 agencies reporting no disruptions
- 2079 post adoption cases were being supervised

These statistics were circulated as widely as possible to ensure the contribution of the sector was noted.

Politics

The Consortium meetings were now seen as the most useful consultation route with the sector and the Department of Health (DOH), who oversaw adoption, used the channel to introduce the forthcoming discussion on the implications of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions.

At the time it was reported that at least one Local Authority thought that they should pay and receive the same IAF as VAA's.

The Local Government Association (LGA) replaced the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and County Councils in England from 1st April 1997 and a meeting was held on 3rd November 1998 to bring together representatives of Local Authorities and the voluntary sector to discuss issues of concern and to share views and ideas concerning current legislation and practice relating to the disclosure of records of adopted children. The meeting was convened and chaired by the DOH.

In 1999, the DOH developed *Quality Protects* and in the same year the *Adoption Now* initiative was launched and Anne van Meeuwen made a presentation to the Directors of Social Services Adoption Now conference in November.

Progress

In 1996 the Interagency Fee (IAF) was set at £12,882 from 1st April and new rates for Post-Adoption Module Costs were agreed and implemented to take effect from 1st April 1997.

The CVAA Constitution was amended for the first time at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 1997.

Professor Nigel Lowe from Cardiff Law School presented results from his and Mervyn Murch's research "Support Services for Older Children Adopted Out of Care - A National Perspective". The research questioned the role of Local Authorities in Adoption and evidenced the lower disruption rates of VAA placements

In 1997, East Anglia Adoption and Family Care Association became part of Coram.

In 1998, Catholic Care North East and Family Ties (formerly Phyllis Holman Richards Adoption Society) ceased to exist as adoption agencies and St. Andrews Children's Society joined the Consortium.

In 1999, the BAAF Management Board was expanded to include 1 Voluntary Agency nominee appointed via CVAA. Norman Goodwin was elected to the BAAF Board of management and Ruth Watson from IAS was elected to the Social Work Practice Advisory Group.

SSAFA joined CVAA in the same year along with Scottish Adoption, St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Society. Parents for Children also transferred from being an observational member to being a full member.

People

In 1995, Nigel Bennett handed over as Chair to Alison Williams and Caroline Davis joined the committee. A year later, Nigel left and was replaced by Anne Van Meeuwen from Barnardo's. Felicity Collier joined BAAF as the new CEO.

In 1997, Jeanne Kanuik was elected Chair and a year later Yvette Gayford replaced Caroline Davis on the committee. In 1999, Anne van Meeuwen replaced Jeanne Kaniuk as Chair and Felicity Aiken from Father Hudson's joined the committee.

Chapter 3

2000 to 2010: A Decade of Consolidation and Influence



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A Brief History of the CVAA

Chapter 3

2000 to 2010: A Decade of Consolidation and Influence

CVAA embarked on the new decade with £3,243 in the bank! The membership fee remained at £50. The first IAF for the new century was set at £14,427. In addition to its work on the IAF, CVAA was now increasingly focused on influencing the external policy and practice environment for adoption.

Priorities

In 2000, important changes to the Schedule 2 Report were being suggested.

A National Adoption Standards Working party was established, chaired by Dame Margaret Booth with the main focus being on the recruitment of adopters.

Elements included recruitment, preparation (education), vetting (safeguarding), the assessment of the particular strengths, resources and vulnerabilities of prospective adopters within a framework of attachment theory and the relationship between the prospective adopter and their agency. There were also sections on training, matching and competencies.

Significant improvements were also proposed for social workers' training to include the study of attachment theory and child development, and that this should be compulsory for practitioners and managers.

In February 2000, the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. Tony Blair, announced that he would personally lead a review of adoption.

Evidence was submitted to the review and several working groups were established. This began a phase where adoption received high political profile. Denise Platt was appointed as the first Adoption Czarina with Mark Ferrero was selected as the lead civil servant. A Downing Street summit was held and chaired by John Hutton, Minister of State at the DOH. A LAC (2000)16 circular was issued on 7th July 2000.

The resulting report issued by the Performance and Innovation Unit made numerous recommendations including new primary legislation, the setting up of a National Adoption Register, the development of new National Standards, and the establishment of an Adoption and Permanency Task Force which would rapidly scrutinise the backlog of children and adopters who were waiting.

The Adoption and Children Bill was to legally underpin a number of these new policies for adoption which were set out in the 2000 Adoption White Paper. The Bill, published in 2001 also drew much from the draft Adoption Bill which had been published back in 1996.

In July 2001, Jack McConnell, Scottish Minister announced a review of adoption in Scotland. In England, the Adoption Standards and Draft Practice Guidance was published on 7 August 2001.

Norwood Ravenswood was selected to run the new Adoption Register. (CVAA had actually considered bidding to take on this role but decided not to do so.)

In 2002, the Adoption and Children Act came into force and David Holmes replaced Mark Ferrero as the lead on adoption at the DOH.

In the same year CVAA successfully overturned the Home Office's definition of volunteer and achieved free DBS (then CRB) checks for all prospective adopters.

Plans were laid for consulting on the national minimum standards and on the regulations for the inspection and registration of VAA's by the National Care Standards Commission and the National Assembly for Wales

In 2003, a tendering process for the Independent Review Mechanism was announced and Phase 2 of the Scottish Adoption Review began.

In 2004, The Draft Regulations and Guidance to accompany the Adoption and Children Act 2002 were introduced and sector consultation took place on each of the sections over a period of time.

CVAA was invited to contribute to a new All-Party Parliamentary Group on Adoption that was being set up and Norwood was appointed to run the Independent Review Mechanism from April 2004.

CVAA wrote to the then Minister the Rt Hon. Margaret Hodge concerning the disparity between monies being allocated to develop adoption across local authorities and the lack of support for VAAs.

In 2005, BAAF were appointed to run the Adoption Register and a year later **Every Child Matters** was launched.

Progress

In 2001, a meeting - *Voluntary Adoption Agencies and Service Level Agreements – What Are The Issues?* was held at Stephenson Hall on 28th February 2001. 24 VAAs attended with another eight offering apologies.

The AGM that year considered the future role of CVAA within the new Adoption arena. CVAA sought to be the recognised voice of voluntary sector agencies through being proactive in promoting the voluntary adoption sector, having a clearly defined presence, supporting networking between member agencies, offering consultancy/signposting/training to members and monitoring the development of the fee structure.

One of the main outcomes of identifying these strategic ambitions was the aim to raise money by increasing the membership to fund a lead officer for CVAA, initially on a part time basis.

This was an important step forward in CVAA becoming a more significant player in the wider adoption sector within the context of momentous change at the start of this decade.

29 confirmed members and 6 non-members made up the voluntary sector across the UK. A number of the original 41 agencies had ceased trading or withdrawn from adoption work by this point.

690 families were approved and 693 children placed for adoption by VAAs in 2001.

The membership details and a comprehensive list of the sector's range of services was circulated to all Local Authorities, NCVCCO (Children England) and a number of related groups and bodies to publicise the work being undertaken by the sector.

Throughout 2002, CVAA developed a job description and person specification for a policy officer and made several attempts to raise funds. A funding bid to the John Ellerman foundation was unsuccessful as CVAA was not a registered charity. This was despite the fact that the Consortium was representing 30 registered charities. Bids were also made to the Charities Aid Foundation and Section 64 funding was explored.

The Boys and Girls Welfare Society applied to join CVAA as a newly established adoption agency along with Catholic Care NE and Family Care (Scotland).

CVAA hosted a workshop in September 2002, sharing information about CVAA services and discussing the impact of recent Westminster government initiatives. A costed future CVAA action plan was also agreed and in 2003 CVAA was awarded a section 64 grant to take forward some of these developments as part of the new legislative programme.

The Catholic Children and Family Care Society Wales was renamed St David's Children Society and joined CVAA alongside Doncaster Adoption Society and After Adoption.

At the AGM in 2003 it was reported that all VAAs in Scotland, England and Wales were now members of CVAA and that the membership fee would now increase to £100 per agency.

The plans to appoint a paid officer came to fruition in 2003 and Kathryn Parson was appointed as CVAA's first Policy and Development Officer. An initial audit of the top three priorities for CVAA members was conducted and these were identified as:-

- Fees and funding arrangements
- Regulations and legislation
- Quality

At a workshop on 28th January 2004, members identified a vision for the “new” CVAA. The principle strands were:



CVAA introduced the additional 1/6th interagency fee for the post-adoption module for the first time in April 2004.

Manx Adoption Agency and Church of Ireland (Belfast) became members and the committee began to alternate meetings between London and Birmingham to reflect the geographical diversity of the group.

CVAA continued to develop its business plan with the help of John Handley an external consultant and began work to become a company limited by guarantee, alongside being a registered charity.

At an Extraordinary General Meeting on the 27th January 2005 the following Resolution was approved unanimously. To change the CVAA charitable objectives from those currently stated in the Memorandum of Association from:



to:



At the AGM, held in Edinburgh, it was resolved that CVAA would raise the annual membership from £100 to £200 in order to support the future development work of CVAA and to provide evidence of self-help when applying for grants.

Julie Selwyn addressed the AGM on *the Costs and Outcomes of Non-Infant Adoptions* and CVAA UK produced its first formal Annual Report after registering as a company. 36 agencies were members, with TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) accepted as a new member and the Children's Society Adoption Team (East Midlands) incorporated into the Coram Family from April 2005.

The interagency fee was set at £18,853.

Three training days were held throughout the year establishing a pattern for more regular training for member agencies going forward and a Finance and Training Group was set up, but CVAA was unsuccessful in obtaining a second section 64 grant fund to support its work.

In 2006, CVAA finally secured funding of £30,000 per year for 5 years with the first grant payable in March 2006 from the Pidem Trust, a private funding source who were supportive of adoption work. This was a significant outcome for CVAA and paved the way for the future after being unsuccessful in seeking a further section 64 grant.

The 2006 AGM was held in Chester with the following resolution considered by CVAA members:

'The CVAA Executive recommends to our membership that the current subscription fee be increased from £200 per agency to £250 per agency for the financial year 2006 – 2007.' Thereafter it will be increased by the rate of inflation for the next two years, 07/08 and 08/09 respectively."

CVAA published 1000 copies of *CVAA - A Members Directory* outlining the services and resources of each member agency and received a £3,000 grant to set up its first website.

Kath Parsons left CVAA and Lynn Burns was appointed as CVAA Director, again on a part time basis on 1st Oct 2006. A month later Christine Prickett joined CVAA to provide business support services.

In 2007 CVAA began work with Red Ochre (Uday Thakkar) to develop their strategic offer having received funding from the DfES to respond to the Deloitte research which had identified two key areas: the marketing of the services provided by VAAs and the possibility of shared business support services across two or more VAAs.

The AGM was held in Belfast that year, with a reception held at Stormont Castle and Parliament buildings. The development of a strategy for CVAA for 2007 to 2012 being the main topic for discussion.

In 2006/7, 581 adopters were approved, and 561 children placed by VAAs

This was also the year in which the Equality Act 2006, Sexual Orientation Regulations started to impact on the work of VAAs. CVAA records that

“A diverse picture is emerging from discussions within the Catholic agencies: ranging from ceasing involvement in adoption services to agreeing an open policy.”

This was a very challenging period in the history of VAAs which had been part of Catholic Dioceses as they navigated their commitment to embrace the implications of the Equality Act and ensure that their services were open to those of any and no faith, whilst seeking to maintain some links with the Catholic church which had, for many of them, been a significant source of voluntary funding. Various solutions were achieved but for all, their membership of CVAA became even more crucial. However, it is important to note that VAAs were pioneers in working with the LGBTQ+ community and in 2014 PACT opened the UK's only LGBTQ+ dedicated service in Brighton through DfE expansion grant funding.

With the increasing financial responsibilities, CVAA moved to having an agency Finance Director responsible for compiling the accounts and providing accurate financial information, working alongside the trustee, holding the treasurer portfolio. Susy White from Adoption Matters was the first to take on this responsibility.

Other changes were happening for members too. Adoption Matters NW and Blackburn Diocesan Adoption Agency (BDAA) merged to become Adoption Matters, with Brian Williams BDAA retiring as Director after 22 years in charge and the Independent Adoption Service merged with TACT.

2007 was also the year 7000 Teddy Bears were donated for adopted children by Build a Bear!

In 2008, a bid was made to the DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) Children and Young People's Programme which reached the second round but was ultimately unsuccessful.

However, DCSF, who were now responsible for adoption services, awarded a second grant to enable Red Ochre to undertake a Phase 2 Project The purpose of this was to test the findings from Phase 1 and identify the specific areas of concern faced by the more financially resource constrained or strategically challenged members. It would also allow CVAA to create resources and provide support to those members specifically, as well as the sector generally.

The findings from the two Red Ochre studies were presented at the members meeting held on 28th November 2008. The work undertaken by Red Ochre was very helpful in clarifying the issues of concern for the VAA sector and for individual agencies. It also confirmed the steps that CVAA could take to better support VAAs and this objective view informed bids for increased funding.

A new website went live on 1st April 2008 as a result of significant developments during 2007/8 when there was an increase in the number of enquiries received from prospective adoptive parents – from 23 the year before to 307. The new website was mentioned in the Daily Mail.

CVAA were now Clerks of the All Parliamentary Group for Adoption and Fostering, which, although creating additional demands on business and support services, nevertheless placed CVAA strategically closer to MPs.

A major CVAA study was also published in 2008:

Consortium of Voluntary Adoption agencies: analysis of statistics

Julie Selwyn, Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol. Published April 2008.

The study aimed to use the annual data collection which had grown from the 17 items required in 2001 to 36 items in 2007, to examine trends and make comparisons with national statistics.

CVAA commissioned the Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies at the University of Bristol to do the following:

- To review the statistics collated by CVAA in respect of the activities of the VAAs between the years 2001-2007
- To advise on whether any amendments should be made to the annual return for 2007-2008
- To produce a written report which could be shared with CVAA members, and others where appropriate

The AGM was held in Cardiff in 2008 where the CVAA Board recommended to the membership that CVAA change its name to CVAA UK, thus more publicly reflecting the organisation's long-standing commitment to colleagues, and service users, across the four nations. This was ratified by the Charity Commission later in the year.

It was also agreed that a Vice-Chair should be appointed who would become Chair at the end of their term of office as Vice-Chair. The job descriptions for the Chair Vice-Chair and Company Secretary were updated reflecting the increasingly professional approach being taken to governance.

In October 2008, CVAA carried out an adopter survey which provided the following **key findings:**

- 4 out of 10 people didn't know about VAAs when they first thought about adoption
- 1 out of 5 didn't know what voluntary meant
- 1 out of 5 thought that they would have to pay a VAA
- Searching the internet was the most common way in which adopters found an agency, followed by recommendation of other adopters

- 6 out of 10 people approached more than one agency before they made an application
- 100% would recommend their VAA to someone interested in adopting

In 2008, 506 families were approved and 736 children placed.

There were also significant changes in membership. BAAF became CVAA's newest member, with Mo O'Reilly a previous CVAA Board member representing the organisation. Family Futures also joined CVAA along with IAC (Intercountry Adoption Centre) and Adoption Plus the following year.

NCH changed its name to become Action for Children and Doncaster Adoption Society became the Yorkshire Adoption Agency. Catholic Caring Services Purley, Winchester and Portsmouth were re-badged as "Cabrini" and CCS Bristol changed its name to Clifton Children's Society still using the initials CCS.

1 June 2009, Father Hudson's changed its name to Adoption Focus and the same year Parents for Children merged with TACT.

CCRS Adoption (Salford) Manchester ceased offering adoption services with the case load and the staff transferring to CCS Preston.

Sue Rayner, Director of Durham Family Welfare sadly passed away after a short illness on 20 December aged 53. Margaret Bell became Interim Director and subsequently Director.

The new CVAA logo was adopted in 2009.



PIDEM paid CVAA years 4 and 5 of their funding, ending a partnership that had enabled CVAA to develop its infrastructure and staffing over the five year period. The membership fee increased to £500. The cost of operating CVAA was now over £40,000 and if all aspects of work were to be covered properly the potential cost was estimated at £65,000.

In 2009, 567 families were approved and 673 children placed.

People

Sadly, Canon Chris Fisher, a founding committee member of CVAA died in a tragic accident in 2000 and in October 2001 Ann van Meeuwen's sudden death was also recorded.

In 2001, Norman Goodwin replaced Ann van Meeuwen as Chair. Yvette Gayford (PACT) was appointed Treasurer. Ruth Tuckey (CCS Southwark) and Deborah Lightfoot (NCH) were appointed to the Committee.

In 2002, David Beard (Barnardo's) and Stephen Small (St Andrews CS, Edinburgh) joined the Committee and the following year Yvette Gayford replaced Norman Goodwin as Chair.

Deborah Lightfoot was nominated as Treasurer, David Beard resigned and Hazel Halle, (Nottingham CCS) and Patricia Lowe (SSAFA) joined the Committee. Ruth Dubois (CCS Arundel) and Deborah Lightfoot (NCH) all left the Committee and Chris Smith (St Francis) and Amanda Forshaw (Caritas Care) joined. Mo O'Reilly (Barnardo's) also joined and became Treasurer in August.

In 2005, Graham Pellew (Faith in Families) and Jadwiga Ball (Clifton CS) joined the committee expanding the agencies involved in running CVAA.

Joyce Quine retired from the Manx Adoption Service after over 25 years' service and Catriona Morris became the new Director.

In 2006, Chris Smith (St Francis) replaced Yvette Gayford as Chair. Lynn Charlton (After Adoption) and Sue Cotton (NCH) joined the Executive Committee.

Big changes in 2007 led to Norman Goodwin being elected Chair for a second period, with Stephen Small elected to the new position of Vice-Chair. Amanda Forshaw and Chris Briggs (Caritas Care) took over the Treasurer and financial management roles respectively.

Yvette Gayford retired from CVAA following her retirement from PACT. Jadwiga Ball left the Executive and Chris Smith stood down as Chair but continued to serve as a trustee. Rosemary Hurl joined the Board thereby completing the objective that the Executive had representation from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Chapter 4

2010 to 2020: A Landscape
Changed Forever

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A Brief History of the CVAA

Chapter 4

2010 to 2020: A Landscape Changed Forever

From 2005 to 2010, CVAA had begun to achieve some of the aspirations and goals that it set for itself. A new horizon was beginning to emerge from 2009 onwards which would change the landscape forever.

Politics and profile

In 2010, the Policy Exchange, an independent education charity, and Britain's largest centre right think tank, commissioned and completed their research note, "*No Place Like Home: Improving Adoption Services in England*" James Groves (Ed), (2010).

CVAA secured a meeting with Nick Hurd (Conservative) the opposition member responsible for the Third Sector and the Conservative's Adoption Working Party chaired by Tim Loughton MP produced its first draft findings in March 2010. The outcomes of this set the policy direction on adoption for the new Westminster government.

After this publication the DCSF working group continued to make good progress but then went into purdah due to the General Election and the final report was also delayed. The delays heightened interest, and the media began to pay attention leading to several opportunities to profile the role of VAA's in adoption provision, and to highlight the inequality of the IAF.

The difficulties being faced by the sector around the IAF and attracting sufficient income also came to a head with the closure of one long standing VAA, Manchester Adoption Society. This was a particularly significant loss of an agency which had pioneered concurrent planning. The Together Trust decided to cease adoption work and transferred their services to Adoption Matters Northwest.

These events enabled CVAA to make further advances in the media with television coverage on the Politics Show, Inside Story, The One Show and Newsnight, and written coverage in, amongst others, Children Now and the Local Government Chronicle.

The threat to the VAA sector was a very real one and each agency faced the challenge of ensuring they were fit for purpose in such a difficult financial climate.

A small working party was established by DCSF, which included CVAA, BAAF and the ADCS (England).

One outcome was taken forward, with the ADCS recommending to their members an immediate increase in the IAF, and an agreement to work in a phased way to reach the figure suggested in the Selwyn Report. This was seen as an important threshold for the sector and was aimed to help agencies move forward to a more stable financial footing.

On 6th May 2010, the Conservatives were the largest party returned to Westminster following the General Election. Tim Loughton MP was appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families. In a letter dated 18th November 2010, he encouraged agencies to increase the number of children finding an adoptive family and announced the setup of a Ministerial Advisory Group to provide expert advice on a range of practical proposals to share and improve practice, including making better use of the Adoption Register and extending its proactive matching role.

A new Coalition Westminster Government was formed. Tim Loughton remained as Minister for Children, the Advisory Group on Adoption was retained and gained added significance. The DCSF working group was superseded by a Minister's Advisory Group, set up and chaired by Tim Loughton following the General Election.

In October 2010 the Prime Minister, David Cameron, included adoption in his speech at Conservative Party Conference. In a section of the speech addressing work with the voluntary sector he said:

“There are certainly some encouraging examples of imaginative, forward looking thinking in relationship to commissioning and family finding for children in need of adoption. But I have a strong sense that in some areas the perception of how an adoption service should be run does not take into full account of the role the voluntary sector can play in partnership with the local authority. Despite all the evidence there still seems to be a widespread view that making use of the VAAs should be seen as a last resort. Yet the evidence shows conclusively that placements with families recruited by the VAAs are no costlier than those involving families found by the local authority. I want to see more collaborative working and effective partnerships with VAAs to drive cost effective services and reduce delays.”

Edward Timpson was elected as one of the APPGAF Co-Chairs beginning a very positive and productive period for adoption with strong links to the mainstream political system.

Andrew Christie, representing ADCS, had been given a mandate by the ADCS to discuss and negotiate the fee on their behalf. However, he had no power to ensure the LAs followed his suggestions. The CVAA board agreed that the best outcome would be for VAAs and LAs to be on a level playing field, all charging the same fee irrespective of who provided the family. This fee would hopefully be at the level agreed by the Selwyn Report of £36K.

Improving outcomes for children, young people, and families:

A National Prospectus was published on 22 November 2010

2011 would be one of the most challenging years for the voluntary sector and yet would offer some of the most exciting opportunities for CVAA.

The Adoption Stakeholder Group and the Minister's Advisory Group on Adoption were both set up in 2011 alongside the Adoption Research Initiative.

In Feb 2011 a full board discussion with Colin Rees proposed Framework Agreements as a possible alternative to the IAF. CVAA argued for a wider options consideration despite the Commercial Unit thinking that Framework Agreements would be the solution to most of the IAF problems. The cross-sector representation on the group aimed to avoid any criticism that this was a biased CVAA proposal just aimed to support the survival of the VAA sector.

On Tuesday 5th July 2011 The Times headline read:
“Forgotten No More: The Case for Adoption.”

The Narey Report was published and in August 2011 key CVAA Board members met with Martin Narey, newly appointed as the Westminster Government’s Adoption Tsar.

The aims, concerns and messages prioritised by CVAA were:

- To urge the Minister to commission ‘An appraisal of options for a new structure for adoption placements in the UK’
- To gain universal acknowledgement of the real costs of placing a child for adoption and if possible achieve ‘a level playing field’ in the fee charged between LAs and by VAAs
- To achieve a change in culture, particularly within the social work and legal professions, to recognise that adoption benefits children, and that VAAs are focussed on the best interests of children
- Concern about the decrease in enquiries from prospective adopters as evidenced in the VAAs’ statistical returns for 2010/11. CVAA was also concerned that in many LAs prospective adopters are waiting for unacceptable periods of time to begin their adoption assessment
- The impact of the IRM
- Decreasing bureaucracy in the adoption route both for children and prospective adopters
- Communication and collaboration between the VAAs and the statutory sector

In January 2011, Cass Business School, Baker Tilley and PACT produced a report on *The Social Return of Investment in Adoption* by Jim Clifford. The economic cost benefit analysis illustrated a £1.1million benefit accrued for each adopter couple recruited.

Jim Clifford then produced a paper; *“Summary Proposal for an Appraisal of Options For A New Structure for Adoption Placement in the UK.”*

It contained four possible research options that could be pursued.

1. Current system, enhanced
2. Personalisation approach
3. Three-level commissioning from the Voluntary Sector
4. Providing the Strategic Management of the Adoption Arena by commissioning from a Voluntary-Public Sector Consortium

The Revised Statutory Adoption Guidance, which was generally welcomed by CVAA, was published in January 2011. “CVAA supports and applauds the revision of the Statutory Guidance which we believe does highlight the Westminster Government’s agenda in terms of improving adoption practice and achieving adoption for children without delay”.

In February 2011 *Sustainable Social Services in Wales: A Framework for Action* was published by Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Social Services

The latest national statistics on Children Looked After by LAs in England were released on 28th September 2011;

- There were 65,520 children looked after at 31st March 2010, an increase of 2% from 2009 and a 9% increase since 2007
- 3050 looked after children were adopted from care during the year ending 31st March 2011, a decrease of 5% from 2010 and an 8% decrease from 2007
- Only 60 children under 1 were adopted

The Joint Review of Adoption by the Department for Education (the renamed DCSF) and HM Treasury 2011 was completed, but the report was not published.

At the end of 2011, Mark Owers began working with the Treasury compiling a report for Downing Street and Annie Crombie was appointed as the new responsible person for adoption in DfE.

The Expert Working Group on Adoption was established in January 2012, and on 12th February 2012 Secretary of State, Michael Gove made his pivotal speech on adoption.

An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling delay and *The Expert Working Group Report – Redesigning Adoption* were both published on 9th March 2012.

The Action Plan set out current concerns which were:

- Too few children available for adoption
- It takes too long to secure and adoptive placement
- Children become older and more damaged
- The application and assessment process for prospective adopters is elongated, unduly intrusive and bureaucratic. It is a disincentive to adopt

- For some applicants the system experienced is unfair, inaccessible and inconsistent
- Adoptive parents often feel abandoned as they care for increasingly hurt and children with additional needs

At this time there was consistency of ministers in Tim Loughton and Edward Timpson and the input of an influential key player in Martin Narey. The presence of real and 'live' statistics on adoption had huge political significance.

The outcomes of this work were:

- The Introduction of the two-stage assessment process
- The development of the Adoption Support Fund
- Capacity Building in both LAs and VAAs
- A rise in the number of children adopted to the highest number in recent history
- The setting up of the Adoption Leadership Board

In 2012, in response to the changes proposed by government, a project working group of Norman Goodwin, Jan Fishwick and Chris Smith from CVAA and Alasdair Macarthur (PACT trustee and management consultant) met in Chester to set up and develop business models going forward. The working hypothesis was that:

'Change is inevitable; they (politicians and policy makers) may not know what it will look like, and we (VAAs) can effect that. With external help we may be able to come up with a 'win/win' model'.

Work commenced on the **Two-Stage Process**

This idea was to combat suggestions by Michael Gove that adopter assessments could be completed in 3 months. The plan was to radically speed up the adopter assessment process, suggesting 2 stages in 6 months. The adopter-led phase of 2 months and the assessment phase lasting 4 months.

The two-month pre-qualification phase was to include agency guided, adopter-led statutory checks, initial training and preparation and a range of self-assessment tools.

The full assessment phase that followed was envisaged as adopter-guided, agency-led intensive preparation and training, with new streamlined and analytical assessment process, and transparent arrangements and timescales agreed between each agency and prospective adopters.

CVAA gave strong support to the new 6-month approval process and assessment contract and "sold" it via Martin Narey to the Westminster Government and the DfE.

CVAA also suggested (based on statistics and with some additional money to support our infrastructure) that VAAs could raise the numbers of children they placed to 1000. Martin Narey commented that ‘**VAAs not only talk the talk but walk the walk!**’

Norman Goodwin represented CVAA and Martin Narey then presented evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee, supporting the case for adoption reform.

In 2013, £1 million was awarded to the voluntary adoption sector. CVAA’s model was designed to build on our proven ability to increase capacity within the VAA sector; securing all VAAs’ commitment to the growth agenda and achieving a 43% increase in adopter approvals (from a 2011/12- 2012/13 baseline). VAAs committed to 28% growth, evidencing the ability to continually drive performance and build sector capacity.

The DfE believed that a strong voluntary adoption agency sector was a crucial step towards the sustainable reform of the adoption system and **in August 2013 announced a £16 million booster package of support for the VAA sector** comprising:

- £13 million of Expansion Grants in 2014-16 for new and existing VAAs;
- £2 million total in Start-Up Grants for up to four new entrants; and
- £970,000 worth of business development support for new and existing VAAs, to help develop strategies to scale-up sustainably

The invitation to tender *for an Agency to Distribute and Manage Expansion Grants To Voluntary Adoption Agencies in England* was issued in Nov 2013 and CVAA bid to administer the grants, putting together a grant management team to bid for the money and if successful to administer the funds.

Ray Shostak agreed to chair, with Chris Smith, the new CVAA CEO, who was being appointed, Mark Owers as VAA Expansion Advisor, Colin Prickett as Grant Manager in relation to contracts and compliance, Christine Prickett as Grant Administrator and Sophia Parker as Consultant/Innovation Adviser making up the rest of the team.

Broadly speaking, the model consisted of two major grant schemes, one focussed around workforce capacity and one around the recruitment of prospective adopters. Bids could be sole bids or from consortia; groups of VAAs or VAAs in conjunction with others to bring down management costs. In addition, there were five small booster packages for the smaller VAAs. The bulk of the grant was divided into growth units of around £300,000. Agencies applied for one or several growth units to achieve adoptive placements for a range of children, which had to include “harder to place” children.

Initially, it was thought that the DfE were looking at an increase from 1,000 to 2,000 children placed, but it was then understood to be 2,000 sets of adopters, which was an increasingly challenging target.

In accordance with the design of the grant programme, funding was made available as:

- System Capacity Building Grants, provided to address the two key issues impacting on all VAAs, namely Adopter Recruitment and Workforce Capacity
- Expansion Grants focussed on medium to larger VAAs
- Booster Grants focussed on VAAs operating at a smaller scale of adoption activity

The success in achieving 1,000 adoptions was celebrated and another Expansion Grant was agreed at a total of £13 million scheme to recruit 2,000 adopters by 2016. A detailed and complex system of monitoring performance (a traffic light model) was devised and applied, and this enabled constructive dialogue with grant recipients regarding their performance against objectives.

Despite the emphasis on growth, the first signs of reduced numbers of children with plans for adoption was also noticed at this time. This change in the external environment was flagged to Martin Narey.

Expansion Grants delivery began in 2014. It was envisaged that there would be two grant rounds (commencing in April and December 2014) with provision for a third grant round should it be deemed necessary. In the event, three substantive rounds were delivered.

- **Round one** was launched in April 2014. 10 Expansion Grant awards were made totalling £6 million, and five Booster Grant awards totalling £500,000.
- **Round two** comprised of two System Capacity Building Grants of £1 million each focussed on Adopter Recruitment and Workforce Capacity. These were awarded in January 2015 to a consortium led by one national VAA and encompassing all VAAs.
- **Round three** opened in October 2014 with a new specification focussed on children matched, rather than adopters approved and incorporating an increased emphasis on children who were “harder to place” with a requirement for 100% additional matches being achieved for such children.

During 2014, the DfE introduced a consultancy programme as part of one of the VAA grant rounds. This was provided by Methods Advisory. After the initial work, it was clear that greater engagement was needed between CVAA member agencies, Methods and DfE to re-focus some of the work to ensure it was both relevant and helpful. Graham Pellew was asked to chair a Steering Group on behalf of DfE and CVAA, with Alison Miller and Carolyn Oliver also participating alongside other VAA colleagues. This group met quarterly until the end of the programme in March 2016, advising on content, direction and approach, by which time a clear level of satisfaction about the services received from Methods Advisory had been achieved. Grants from DfE had been contingent on participation in this consultancy.

The National Adoption Service of Wales also began work in 2014.

In January 2015, seven Expansion Grant awards were made totalling £2.8 million and seven Booster Grant awards totalling £700,000.

By the end of March 2015, £4,321,922 had been claimed from DfE against monies expended by VAAs participating in the Expansion Grants programme. Managing the funding profile between DfE and CVAA proved challenging with the unpredictability of agency spending in a time of a rapidly changing external environment, creating additional complexities for agencies and for the grant management functions.

The Queen's Speech on 27 May 2015 included an Education and Adoption Bill to take forward the Conservative Party's manifesto commitment to introduce Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) in England. The Bill was a priority for the first session of Parliament and was scheduled to have its second reading in mid-June.

19 RAA projects were eventually accepted to develop their work further beginning with five demonstration projects:

- Stockport
- Yorkshire and Humber
- Adopt Central England
- Central East
- Adopt Wessex

All the pilot projects had CVAA local member agencies as part of the management group who felt involved and valued.

3rd Feb 2016 saw the far-reaching judgement on case Re B in the Supreme Court of England, which continues to affect decision making on adoption in the Family Courts to the present day.

DfE's vision for social care reform '*Putting Children First*', was published and Andrew Christie became Chair of the Adoption Leadership Board.

The Practice Improvement Fund was launched in 2016 which aimed to "*inspire the transformation of the adoption system and improve services for adopted children and families, wherever they live and disseminate excellent practice and develop innovative services which are responsive to the needs of the system.*"

Round one opened in April 2016 and invested in 25 projects across four areas:

- Driving improvement in matching and recruitment
- Speeding up stable placements via early permanence schemes
- Expanding support provision for adoptive families
- Cross cutting issues at a national level

In line with commitments as Grant Manager, CVAA presented a 31-page End of Programme Report to the DfE and held a review meeting with them on 23rd August.

A total of 1,517 adopters had been approved and 1,572 children placed by agencies in receipt of Expansion Grants across the two years of the programme.

The Board considered that many of the challenges that agencies had faced in delivering against their grant agreements were a consequence of the external environment or of decisions and processes for which DfE was responsible.

Edward Timpson left his role as Children's Minister in 2017.

Round 2 of the Practice Improvement Projects, to be operational between April 2017 and March 2019, were sought, with the objective of delivering better outcomes for children by improving the timeliness and quality of matches and improved access to adoption support services. Proposals needed to demonstrate that they would benefit the overall system and the RAA model.

In August 2017, a new report was published looking at the operation of the IAF. *Inter-agency Adoption and the Westminster Government's Subsidy of the Inter-Agency Fee* by Cherilyn Dance, Canterbury Christ Church University, Elsbeth Neil, University of East Anglia and Ruth Rogers Manchester Metropolitan University.

[In England, VAAs approved 22% of all adopters and placed an estimated 23% of all children in 2016-17.](#)

The new IAF rates were implemented in Scotland from April 2019 with the support of the Scottish Minister and the level playing field for all placing agencies has been maintained in Scotland since this date.

The DfE RAA programme continued in 2019-20, with 12 RAAs 'going live' during the year.

The National Adopter Recruitment Steering Group (NARSG) was established in England, chaired by Mark Owers and made up of representatives from the VAA and RAA sector, with other key stakeholders such as CoramBAAF and Adoption UK. DfE also recruited to a new strategic co-ordinating post for RAAs, soon to be followed by a team of national staff. The first You Can Adopt campaign launched in 2020.

Progress

In August 2010, Chris Smith and Norman Goodwin met with Colin Rees and the team at the DfE who constituted the Commercial Group, reporting to Ministers. They had carried out a "deep dive" review of 17 LAs and 15 VAAs during the Summer of 2010. In many ways it was a sobering report, but it was equally challenging. The key issues to address were:

- VAA key messages for LAs
- VAA key messages for the policy team at DfE

- VAA top 3 priorities in terms of outcomes
- Ideas on how the Commercial Group could assist in this

It was reported at the AGM in 2010 that CVAA UK had provided training to 170 delegates that year, including members, LA staff and other individuals and had received around twelve hundred unique visits to the website every month.

CVAA proposed an increase of the IAF to £27,000 and 614 children were placed by VAAs.

There were further significant changes within the membership: CCS Westminster ceased making adoption placements but continued to provide adoption support for their existing families. Childlink Adoption Society came under the umbrella of Parents and Children Together (PACT) in August 2010 on the retirement of Childlink's chief executive, Caroline Hesslegrave. Childlink's trustees expressed their delight that the service it had been providing for nearly 100 years could be continued through this union with an agency that shared its commitment to the welfare of children and families.

The 2011 AGM was held in Newcastle Upon Tyne at Baker Tilley offices by kind permission of Jim Clifford who alongside Alasdair Macarthur brought specific expertise to assist the trustees and the sector at this time. Social Impact Bonds were first discussed at the CVAA AGM as part of the emerging strategy and the *Extended Initial Outline of Proposal for a Social Impact Bond to fund Inter- Agency Fee bridge on Adoption* report was produced.

The membership fee was raised to £1,500 per member.

CVAA collected headline information on enquiries and adoption applications from 2009 to 2011 and published data showing that between 1st April 2005 and 31 March 2010, 2915 children were placed by VAAs with 149 disruptions at a rate of 5.11%

CVAA developed a paper outlining: *Summary Proposal for an Appraisal of Options for a New Structure for Adoption Placement in the UK* in April 2011 and the IAF was raised to £27,000. It was anticipated that the LAs would charge the same amount and together we would move to the £36,000 true cost, albeit that this had been calculated several years earlier.

618 children were placed and 467 families approved in 2011.

In Oct 2012, CVAA set up a leadership team of Chris Smith, Norman Goodwin and Mark Owers to advance the emerging Westminster Government agenda on adoption.

IAAM – It All About Me was set up on 6th Feb 2012 in response to the work carried out by Jim Clifford into Social Impact Bonds. Rather than focus on all Inter agency work the project concentrated on finding families for “harder to place children” who had been waiting the longest as identified either from the Adoption

Register or by LAs themselves. It also included children identified at an early stage as being unlikely to match easily with potential adoptive parents due to the nature of their additional needs.

Each child was assessed by the Maudsley, with Dr Matt Woolgar acting as clinical lead. Andrew Thompson was appointed to the project professional lead post in June. 18 agencies committed money to develop the project, but a smaller number opted to be the first “early adopters”, working collaboratively. This included PACT, Adoption Matters and Caritas Care partnership, Action for Children, After Adoption, Barnardo’s and Family Futures.

All had substantial adoption support offers to include in the scheme.

Funded by DfE, three new organisations had applied to Ofsted to become registered as VAAs: Adopters for Adoption (Core Assets), Coram Cambridge and ARC North East. Core Assets had already confirmed they wished to become members of CVAA having DfE’s agreement to work towards registration by March 2014, and also requested to pay three years’ membership fees in advance.

Coram Cambridge was a joint VAA venture between Coram and Cambridgeshire County Council for Cambridgeshire’s adoption service; the recruitment of adopters and placement of children, including inter-agency.

The Board agreed in principle to accept all three as ‘Affiliated Members’, with full membership being conditional upon them becoming Ofsted registered by 1 April 2014, and signing the Membership Agreement.

In January 2014, Mark Owers was appointed as CEO of CVAA with Non Kinchen Smith and Janet Ward providing business support.

Christine and Colin Prickett left the organisation with thanks for 8 years of service above and beyond the call of duty, Christine proving comprehensive business support and Colin helping with the data analysis and protections required for the expansion grants.

The 2014 AGM was held on the 19th and 20th June 2014 in Belfast, where the success of the £1 million VAA Expansion Scheme was celebrated for achieving 1000 adoptions. However, the first signs of the number of children with plans for adoption falling was noted by the AGM and agencies were beginning to monitor this closely. During this period VAAs were instrumental in supporting pioneering work through collaborations with other organisations entering the sector, namely Home for Good, focussed on working with churches and New Family Social, set up to support LGBTQ+ adopters.

Non Kinchin-Smith left CVAA in September 2014 and Carmel McEvoy was appointed as a PA to the CEO.

Ensuring the CVAA Works for You - Serving Members: The Consultation was published in 14 January 2015

The College of Social Work (TCSW) was commissioned by the ASGLB to organise a series of six roundtable events across England to focus on achieving best practice in matching children and adopters with CVAA as one of the main contributors.

A CVAA trustee taskforce was set up in January 2015 to lobby for adoption support, what it might cover and costs. CVAA developed a practice framework and the final report was published in June 2015 for the AGM.

Mark Owers left CVAA in March 2015, after three years' service and Annie Crombie was appointed as the new Chief Executive of CVAA.

The appointment note read:

“Annie began her career as a teacher and has remained committed to young people and families ever since. She is currently Head of Early Years Funding at the Department for Education but will be known to many of you from her previous role as Head of Adoption Reform where she made an outstanding contribution to the current agenda - including the establishment and co-chairing of the ‘implementation group’ that preceded the Adoption Leadership Board. Other achievements have included work on Early Intervention, Youth Justice and Schools. Of particular importance to CVAA going forward will be her previous work with local authorities in commissioning children services - including adoption. In addition to both sector knowledge and the proven ability to work with government Annie will bring to CVAA a relentless passion for making the lives of children and families better.”

CVAA completed its fifth year of providing the secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Adoption and Fostering.

The CVAA Annual Conference and AGM took place on the 4th and 5th of June 2015 in Chester addressed by Edward Timpson, now appointed Schools and Families Minister.

Alex Wylde (Policy and Grant Management) and Maria Atkins (Business Support) joined CVAA and the organisation said farewell to Carmel McEvoy who had joined as a temporary support and ably helped CVAA for quite a period.

The Annual Financial statements showed the Gross Incoming Resources of the Charity soared to £4,851,331 from £1,056,655 the previous year. The “joys” of being a Grant Administrator!

The CVAA Membership Engagement: System Capacity Building Programme Conference took place in September 2015 and a few short months later BAAF went into administration and closed with some aspects of the service becoming part of the Coram family as CoramBAAF.

IAAM “It’s all about me” effectively ceased new activity in 2016, although support for the children placed and their adoptive families continued.

CVAA worked with Alma Economics on a new report on New Thinking on Adoption Funding which was finally produced in Sep 16, and Methods compiled a CVAA development paper.

May 2016 saw the first event for VAA trustees took place. CVAA recognised it could provide a forum for sharing experiences and ideas among trustees in recognition of the critical role they play. Edward Timpson spoke at the event.

The AGM took place in Birmingham and CVAA launched its latest strategy document, *Strategy for CVAA to 2020*. Board Meetings began to alternate between London and York

The 2017 AGM was held in Aberdeen where Mark McDonald (MSP) and the Minister for Childcare and Early Years gave the welcoming address.

In 2017, CVAA received DfE Practice Improvement Funding to develop a programme of work to increase the skill and confidence of senior practitioners, by helping them to consider how they use research and evidence and collect data on impact. The project was to be informed by voluntary sector innovation, drawing on the sector's permanence and adoption specialism and tailored to their needs.

That year, Jessica Southgate was appointed as Head of Strategy and Engagement and Leah Mair to lead on CVAA's Practice Events, along with Patrick Sarsfield providing Business Support.

In 2018, Adoption Matters merged with DFW Adoption Durham under the Adoption Matters banner. Barnardo's Family Placement services announced that they were strengthening and expanding by forming a business partnership with Adoption Plus, and Family Care Nottingham (previously Southwell Diocesan Adoption agency) closed after having served the people of Nottinghamshire for over 130 years.

The IAF was raised as proposed to £31,000 for a single child in June 2018.

In 2018, the Post Adoption Centre (PAC-UK) joined the charity Family Action, who also later in 2020 took on the work of Adoption Services for Adults and the NORCAP Contact Register. CVAA continued to deliver secretariat, policy support and data collection services to the ASGLB and this work continued to the end of June 2019.

The AGM was held in Newcastle in 2018 and in the same year Jessica Southgate left CVAA, replaced by Sam Mercadante as policy officer and Daniel Murdoch replaced Patrick Sarsfield in the business support team. Annie Crombie also left as CEO and was replaced by Maggie Jones in November 2018.

Caroline Davis retired from her role as CEO of Families for Children in Exeter after serving over 25 years.

Birmingham Children's Trust requested to join CVAA as a new VAA established out of the Regional Adoption Agencies programme.

In May, 2019 CVAA said farewell to several staff, Louise Jelks, Simon Nudds and Grace Toller, who had been delivering the ASGLB data collection service. They were transferred to Coram-i as they took over the contract.

Leah Mair also left CVAA at the same time and Petra Jodlova joined the team to take on responsibility for CVAA's new Practice Programme. CVAA has, from its inception, had as a key aim the provision of networking and practice sharing, primarily across its membership and more latterly with those working in the statutory sector and in allied disciplines.

Events were in the early days focussed on the implementation of new legislation, for example Access to Records. Over time, recognising the sector's commitment to innovation, members have increasingly shared their experiences and expertise, in a very generous manner.

The Covid-19 pandemic led to most of the now comprehensive Practice Programme being delivered online, and in recognition of the increased accessibility this allows for busy staff based all over the UK, the majority of the Programme has remained online to the present day. It is important not only as a tool for broadening knowledge, but as a means of strengthening a sector which is and always has been, stronger together.

In June 2019, the CVAA Conference and AGM was held in Bristol and in July. Adoption UK published their first 'Adoption Barometer' report.

After Adoption announced its closure after nearly 30 years of operation. CVAA lost a significant long-standing member agency and Lynn Charlton as its Vice-Chair.

In October 2019, the members area on the CVAA website went live! It was exclusively for CVAA members and here VAAs could collect and publish a wide range of resources to support sector development and share good practice.

People

In 2010, Lyn Burns left CVAA to concentrate on other work after 4 years as Director. Norman Goodwin finished his period of office as Chair and became Vice-Chair. Stephen Small was elected as Chair at the AGM in his agency's home city Edinburgh. Elizabeth Webb and Carolyn Oliver were elected as trustees.

Two longstanding members both announced their retirement; Mo O'Reilly who had been a past treasurer of CVAA and had worked for Barnardo's and most recently BAAF, and Chris Smith who had worked at St Francis' Children's Society for over twenty-five years and had been a long-standing member of the Board and a previous Chair.

Chris therefore stood down from the CVAA Board and became Interim Director of CVAA on a part time basis.

In 2012, Kingsley Peter from TACT joined the Trustees.

Terry Connor retired in 2012, after serving 33 years at the Catholic Children's Society (Arundale, Brighton and Southwark) later becoming Cabrini. He subsequently served as a Trustee of Families for Children and the St. David's Children's Society.

In 2014, CVAA said thank you to Chris Smith, Norman Goodwin and Mark Owers who led the organisation as the Leadership Team for 18 months and secured the DfE VAA Expansion Grants. With the appointment of a CEO, Norman was no longer needed as one of the "Gang of Three" and so he re-joined the Board at the March meeting.

Jeanne Kaniuk also stood down from the Board but would continue to be involved with the work of CVAA for many years to come.

Amanda Forshaw and Graham Pellew were re-elected to the Board and Alison Miller (St Francis) joined. CVAA also said farewell to Jim Cullen, CEO of Caritas Care who retired from post after 30 years with Caritas Care, the last 11 as CEO.

At the AGM in 2013, the membership approved the appointment of an Independent Chair and, at their meeting on 19 June 2014, the Board co-opted Ray Shostak to join the Board as Independent Chair. Lynn Charlton and Jan Fishwick agreed to share the role of Vice-Chair.

In 2015, Kingsley Peter stood down from the board after 3 years. Jan Fishwick was re-elected and Joanne Alper was elected to the Board

In 2016, Graham Pellew resigned from the Board on his retirement from Families for Children and Terry Fitzpatrick joined the Board.

In 2017, Alison Miller left and Jeanne Kaniuk re-joined the Board

In 2018, Gerry Cooney retired after serving at St. David's Children's Society after 29 years, the last 18 years as CEO. This period firmly established the agency as an integral part of Welsh service delivery.

In 2019, Satwinder Sandhu from IAC - The Centre for Adoption joined the Board and Jan Fishwick was elected as Vice-Chair. Joanne Alper left the Board.

Chapter 5

2020 to our 30th anniversary



Chapter 5

2020 to our 30th anniversary

Politics

This has been a time of political instability in England with a total of 7 Ministers for Children appointed in the period from 2020 to 2023.

The first national marketing campaign #YouCanAdopt, organised by the NARSG was launched in February 2020 and a month later in March 2020, the country entered lockdown as the Covid-19 pandemic took hold.

The lockdowns to control the spread of Covid-19 led to huge backlogs in the courts and a worrying lack of social work protection for children living in the most difficult circumstances due to the restrictions on face-to-face contact. The impact of these delays and disruptions are still being felt years later.

£2.8 million in grant aid was provided by the Westminster Government to ensure VAAs could continue to support children and families through the pandemic. This was a vote of confidence in the excellent work VAAs had all been doing to recruit and support adopters, and a mark of the vital part VAAs play in the adoption system as a whole. Slowly things began to move in the right direction, with more matches and introductions taking place, but there is still remains a long way to go before agencies are able to meet their placement targets again.

Sarah Johal, Head of One Adoption West Yorkshire, was appointed by DfE as the National Strategic Lead for RAAs. This was welcomed by the sector and provided an opportunity for CVAA to work collaboratively at a strategic level.

Through 2020 and 2021 the Black Lives Matters movement continued to highlight the negative impact of institutional racism on the lives of all people of colour and the adoption sector took a critical look at its own practice and the need for change to achieve racial justice in adoption and develop a more diverse workforce, representative of the children we serve.

In February 2020, the results of the Scottish Independent Care Review were published including **the Promise** made to all children and young people in care. The Promise was supported by all political parties and continues to impact on both adoption and the delivery services to all care-experienced children.

In November the National Adoption Service of Wales published its four influential good practice guides on aspects of adoption: *Contact, Working with Birth Parents, Transitions and Early Support* and *Adoption Support*.

In 2021, the ASGLB continued under its new Chair, Krish Kandiah, founder of Home for Good, a charity that exists to put fostering and adoption on the agenda of the Church, and in March the Independent Review of Children's Social Care in England was launched.

In June 2021, the DfE published its new Adoption Strategy, *Achieving Excellence Everywhere*, which made little mention of the contribution of VAAs.

The Review of Children's Social Care published its final report on 23rd May 2022, and in spite of strong lobbying by CVAA and others there was virtually no mention of adoption due to the intervention of DfE and the prioritising of their strategy,

The closure of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board was another unwelcome announcement in December 2022.

Together with the almost complete absence of adoption from the English Care Review and the falling figures evidenced in the latest data, there was rising concern that this signalled a downgrading of adoption by the Westminster Government

December 2022 also saw the publication of *Ending Racial Disparity in Adoption*, the final output from the ASGLB.

In February 2023 the Westminster Government issued its response to the Care Review, *Stable Homes Built on Love*, again with almost no reference to adoption. CVAA issued a critical response and wrote to the Children's Minister at the time, urging a more joined up and coherent approach for all care-experienced children and young people.

October 2023 saw the publication of the long awaited report of the Public Law Working Group. CVAA will be involving VAAs in developing a response and so the wisdom and experience of our sector will continue to shape adoption to better serve the next generation of children who cannot live with their birth families.

Progress

In 2020, CVAA presented its new strategy for 2020 to 2023 after extensive consultation with the membership and also commissioned an independent governance review. The findings were reported to the Board and also to the wider membership, to encourage both transparency and good governance.

In February 2020, CVAA achieved a major step forward in developing cross-sector guidelines for the Interagency Fee. The ADCS Council of Reference agreed a set of revised guidance which was distributed to all VAAs, RAAs and LAs.

A month later as lockdown is announced the CVAA March newsletter read:

"Who would have thought the world could change so much in the few short weeks since our last newsletter?"

But change it has, and every VAA in the UK has risen to the challenge with such speed, care, flexibility and imagination; it is truly awe inspiring. From virtual panels to Zoom-based prep groups and bingo for children, along with many more innovative ways of connecting with and supporting the families who matter so much to us, you have used every possible virtual platform and social media route to keep services running.

It is a testament not only to the dedication and commitment of colleagues across the sector, but also to the vital role VAAs play in so many families' lives. This ongoing support for adoptive families and the continuation of recruitment activity is crucially important because we know that many adoptive families are under great strain and far too many children are still waiting for their forever home. We need to be ready to provide those homes when the restrictions are lifted and be there to prevent crises, supporting families through their own difficult times."

In June 2020, CVAA's Board started to hold regular monthly virtual meetings with DfE officials and in September CVAA held its first virtual AGM where Ray Shostak stepped down as Chair and Andrew Webb was appointed as his successor. CVAA expressed its heartfelt thanks to Ray on behalf of the Board and the membership for his considerable contribution to CVAA over the years and his dedication to children.

In September 2020, CVAA held its first virtual conference over two days with speakers from Europe and the USA. The event was hugely successful and inspirational.

As of 31 December 2020, VAAs in England had placed 450 children – 20% of all children placed in the first three quarters of 2020-21, and 10% more than were placed by VAAs in the same period of the previous year. VAAs in England approved 540 adopters in the first 3 quarters of the year – 23% of all adopters approved in that time, and an increase of 13% from the previous year.

In 2021, the CVAA Conference was held in Chester and this was the first opportunity for almost two years for members to meet in person.

CVAA strategic report, *21st Century Adoption* was developed through 2020 and 2021 and set out four key themes to be addressed in order to modernise adoption. Within each theme, ambitions for change were followed by initial thinking to define the challenges and identify potential solutions.

A 21st century adoption system with structures and processes that are collaborative, fit for purpose, and put children's needs at the centre.

- Ambition 1: The adoption and permanence system has coordinated system leadership with common principles and improvement goals that are underpinned by robust data.
- Ambition 2: The voices of those affected by adoption and special guardianship are at the centre of decision-making and reform.
- Ambition 3: Cross-organisational systems work seamlessly so that all of a child's needs are met without delay or bureaucracy.
- Ambition 4: Resources follow the child, enabling all statutory obligations to be met and decisions to be taken solely based on the best interests of the child.

Serving 21st century children by ensuring that every child has a permanent family.

Ambition 5: There is consensus across children's social care and the courts on the benefits of adoption and the children for whom adoption is the best permanency plan.

Ambition 6: All barriers are removed for timely, well-supported permanency placements, with waiting times, reversals, and disruptions all reduced significantly.

Ambition 7: No child leaves care without a permanent family.

Supporting 21st century families through strengthening the contribution that both permanent and birth families make to children's development.

Ambition 8: Children achieve strong identity development and lifelong wellbeing because they are supported by permanent families and enabled to maintain important relationships.

Building 21st century permanence support by ensuring that every child and family receives the right support at the right time.

Ambition 9: Early intervention helps counteract neurological impacts of toxic stress, improve executive functioning, and promote supportive relationships.

Ambition 10: Care-experienced children and adults are enabled and empowered to access lifelong, consistent support that is appropriate to their needs and life stage.

CVAA also developed a new CEO Forum and held three events during 2021.

At the AGM in September it was announced that 1,245 practitioners had been supported through the Practice Programme with over 90% of VAA contributing to learning events.

Adoption Focus and Faith in Families completed a successful merger which secured VAA services across the Midlands.

Sam Mercadante left CVAA after three years having greatly improved the policy services for members and CVAA welcomed Alice Talbot as Head of Policy and Member Services. Alice began work on a major policy paper on the maintenance of significant early relationships for adopted children and young people, with the working title of *My People*.

CVAA launched the latest edition of its website during National Adoption Week in October.

The full year figures published for 21/22 by the ASGLB in England showed that VAAs were still making 19% of adoptive placements in England. This was a drop of 2 to 3% on previous years but provided evidence that VAAs still had a major contribution to make, especially in finding homes for the children who wait the longest, including those in sibling groups.

Maggie Pitts, the CEO of CCS Adoption in Bristol left CCS. Maggie played a pivotal role in developing CCS and contributing to the national adoption agenda over many years.

In August 2022, Families for Children closed after 30 years of supporting children and families across the South West. Families for Children had a long history of providing wonderful adoption services and support to families stretching back to 1948 with both the Church of England and Catholic Children's Society and their closure left no VAA in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, and Dorset.

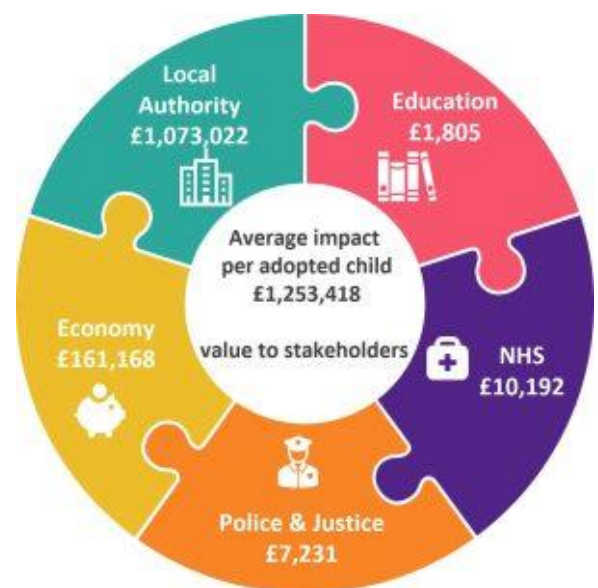
All of the former Anglican Diocesan Agencies apart from PACT (Oxford Diocesan Council) and Adoption Matters (Chester Diocesan Adoption Society) had now ceased to offer adoption services. Blackburn and Durham Dioceses exist as part of Adoption Matters. Historically there were 43 Anglican Dioceses that offered adoption services and most closed with the introduction of the 1976 Adoption Act.

In December 2022, the closure of St Francis was another major loss to the sector and to the many families they created and supported for so many years. St Francis had been a trailblazer in many areas of practice, including support to birth families, and played a vital role in setting up CVAA. The manner of the closures of agencies, often without time to prepare staff and most importantly service users, continued to be a matter of concern for CVAA.

The latest and second seminal social return on investment report: *A Home for me?*¹ commissioned by CVAA was published on 14th December 22 by Jim Clifford and Sonnet Advisory and Impact. It provided a comparative review of the values of different forms of permanence for children; Adoption, Special Guardianship Orders and Fostering.

The analysis confirmed that adoption brings substantial value to society through the permanence, stability and support it can offer children who cannot live with their birth families and the resulting positive outcomes for adopted children and young people into adulthood.

The report was launched in January 2023 in the House of Lords bringing decision makers together to consider the value of adoption to children and wider society. Her Honour Justice Frances Judd welcomed the report in a speech at the event. In April, Alice Talbot went on maternity leave and was replaced by Elizabeth Crowhurst, an adopter, who joined CVAA from the CBI to ably hold the fort on policy and member services.



¹ A home for me? A comparative review of the value of different forms of permanence for children – Adoption, SGOs and Fostering <https://cvaa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/CVAA-The-value-of-adoption-report-final-Nov-22.pdf>

IAC - The Centre for Adoption, the UK's only specialist intercountry adoption agency, became part of the Coram Group in July 2023 and in September 2023 Action for Children announced they were winding up their adoption work. Children England also announced they would be closing in December 2023, after 80 years of representing the children's sector and campaigning for children's rights.

At the end of September 2023, Maggie Jones left her role at CVAA and Satwinder Sandhu, was appointed as the new CEO, starting his position on 2 October 2023.

As we look to the future, CVAA's members continue to support the statutory sector to deliver the best matches possible for the children who wait the longest for adoption. Our membership also continues to diversify their services to work with all children who need permanence. Part of this work focuses on harnessing learning from adoptee voices and those most acutely affected by adoption, and ensuring that our services reflect these experiences.

We also hope for greater collaboration with RAAs, building on the successful model run by Coram Ambitious for Adoption, to date the only VAA to lead and run an RAA, as well as partnerships such as those between Birmingham Children's Trust and Adoption Focus and new emerging models like PACT and Buckinghamshire Council.

The CVAA strategy for 2024-2027 is being finalised for approval by the Board and members and will continue to advocate for adoption to modernise but remain a viable and successful option for children who truly need it.

People

In January 2020 Amanda Forshaw retired as CEO of Caritas Care and resigned as CVAA trustee and Treasurer. Amanda provided excellent stewardship during her time as treasurer ably supported by Finance Director Chris Briggs. Terry Fitzpatrick took over the role as Treasurer assisted by Lisa Parkin at ARC Adoption.

Jeanne Kanuik (Coram) resigned 1st June 2020 having served on the Board for several periods and being involved since the very beginning.

Wendy Keidan from St David's in Wales, Jay Vaughan from Family Futures and Ruth Marriott Families for Children Buckfast were all elected as trustees in September 2020.

In 2021, the Board bid farewell to Jan Fishwick, CEO of PACT and Vice Chair of the CVAA Board who is famed for her generous leadership and being a strong and passionate advocate for VAA collaboration and collective action.

Carolyn Oliver from Barnardo's also retired. Carolyn was an outstanding Board member for CVAA, representing the sector with passion and the credibility which comes from a career-long dedication to children.

Satwinder Sandhu, CEO of the Intercountry Adoption Centre (IAC – The Centre for Adoption), became the new Vice Chair of CVAA, representing the sector on the ASGLB. Natausha Van Vliet from PACT joined the CVAA Board.

The Board was further strengthened by the co-option of Brenda Farrell, Head of Fostering and Adoption at Barnardo's.

In 2022, Norman Goodwin retired as CEO of Adoption Matters and CVAA trustee. Norman spent 37 years in the voluntary adoption sector and was a founder member of CVAA and served continuously on the Board since it was formed, except when he was part of the interim Leadership Team.

Ruth Marriott also left the Board on the closure of Families for Children.

Anna Sharkey from Adoption Focus and Susy White (now CEO) from Adoption Matters joined the CVAA Board at the AGM in September.

CVAA also had some new joiners in 2022 with Hayley Brooks joining as Communications and Business Support Office in August and Emma Shindler starting as a part time analyst in November to improve CVAA's data offering to members.

In 2023, Satwinder Sandhu stepped down from the Board in advance of his application for the CVAA CEO post, to which he was later successfully appointed.

At the September 2023 AGM, Emma Simpson of CCS was elected to the Board and Jay Vaughan was elected to serve a second term. Andrew Webb was also re-elected to serve a second term as Chair.

Marie Braithwaite also joined in September as Programme Administrator to support the delivery of the growing CVAA Practice Programme.



Conclusion

Over the last 5 years there has been a huge increase in the complexity of adoption and in the amount of paper work. It was so much simpler in those early days!

Over those 30 years, there have been many recurring themes some of them are still concerns today.

Similarly, there has been lots of talk about the future of adoption and the future of CVAA, but in a couple of years adoption as we know it today will be 100 years old. Some member agencies of the voluntary sector have been around since the 1700s and many of the VAAs have been around since adoption was legally recognised in 1926.

CVAA itself has now been around 30+ years and is still thriving.

CVAA was pioneering in what it did, passionate in how it did it and continues to exert pressure where it is most needed, even now.

Many people came and went BUT for some of us, these relationships lasted a generation. We created a momentum. We moved a mountain. We did something we had never achieved before.

We promised that we could place 1,000 children as a sector and we would change the way we assessed adopters in the process. We were bold, maybe even fool hardy.

They gave us a million and said do it – then they gave us £13 million more.

And we did it!!

We are custodians of our charities; our agencies. We have the responsibility to pass on the baton to the next generation to do the same.

Let us continue to be described as the “Stars in the Firmament”.

And so, the journey continues...



2023 - Our vision, mission and charitable objectives

CVAA vision is for adopted children, young people and adults to lead happy fulfilling lives in loving families supported by a strong voluntary adoption sector.

CVAA's role in achieving this vision is to champion and support VAAs in their life-changing work. We are wholly committed to adopter choice and the vital contribution of a thriving VAA sector, able to provide the best possible support for birth and adoptive families in their lifelong adoption journeys.

Our mission is to achieve excellence in the adoption system through harnessing the collective expertise, commitment and innovation of the voluntary adoption sector, working together for children, families and adopted adults.

VAAs put children first, always. In our lobbying and advocacy, CVAA upholds that central principle and works to amplify the voice and influence of VAAs using their collective wisdom and the integrity of their work to achieve positive change for children.

Our charitable objectives are:

- To develop standards of excellence in practice and management throughout the voluntary sector.
- To promote cooperation between voluntary and statutory sectors in the adoption system and reduce barriers to interagency placements.
- To influence policy and practice in the wider adoption system at local, regional and national levels



Appendices

Note 1 - List of Original Agencies invited to inaugural meeting of CVAA

Barnardo's
Blackburn Diocesan Adoption Agency
Catholic Care North East (Newcastle)
Catholic Caring Services (Preston)
Catholic Children's Rescue Society (Salford)
Catholic Children and Family Care Society (Wales)
Catholic Children's Society (Arundel and Brighton, Southwark)
Catholic Children's Society (Clifton)
Catholic Children's Society (Nottingham)
Catholic Children's Society (Shrewsbury)
Catholic Children's Society (Westminster)
Catholic Child Welfare Society (Middlesbrough)
Catholic Social Welfare Society (Leeds)
Chester Diocesan Adoption Services
Childlink Adoption Society
Children's Society
Christian Family Concern
Christian Outreach Adoption Society
Council for Christian Care
Doncaster Adoption and Family Welfare Soc. Ltd.
Durham Diocesan Family welfare Council
East Anglia Adoption and Family Care Assc.
Exeter Diocesan Board for Christian Care
Father Hudson's Society, Independent Adoption Service
Manchester Adoption Society
National Children's Home
Norwood Child Care
Nugent Care Society
Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work Inc.
Parents for Children
Phyllis Holman Richards Adoption Society
Plymouth Diocesan Catholic Children's Society
Post Adoption Centre, St Andrew's Children Society
St Francis Children's Society
St Margaret of Scotland Adoption Society
Scottish Adoption Assoc Ltd.
Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen Families Assoc.
Southwell Diocesan Council for Family Care (Nottingham)
Thomas Coram Foundation for Children

Note 2 - List of Member Agencies as at October 2023

Action for Children Adoption
Adopters for Adoption
Adoption Focus
Adoption Matters
Adoption Uk (Associate member)
ARC Adoption North East
Barnardo's
Birmingham Children's Trust
Caritas Care
CCS Adoption
Coram Capital Adoption
Diagrama Foundation
Family Care Adoption Services (Celtic member)
Family Futures CIC
Family Routes (Celtic member)
Coram IAC Intercountry Adoption Centre
Nugent Care
PAC-UK (Associate member)
Parents and Children Together (PACT)
Scottish Adoption (Celtic member)
SSAFA
St Andrew's Children's Society (Celtic member)
St David's Children's Society (Celtic member)
St Margaret's Children & Family Care Society (Celtic member)
Yorkshire Adoption Agency

Note 3 - List of Directors / CEOs of CVAA

Kath, Parsons
Lynn Burns
Christine Smith
The interim Leadership Group - Norman Goodwin, Christine Smith and Mark Owers
Mark Owers
Annie Crombie
Maggie Jones
Satwinder Sandhu (current from 2.10.23)

Note 4 - CVAA Board chairs

The CVAA Board was chaired by members until the appointment of an Independent Chair. This Role has subsequently been carried out by: Ray Shostak and Andrew Webb.

Note 5 - CVAA VAA Expansion Grant Management Model

This outline was provided to the Board at the time of the bidding process to ensure transparency and due diligence was afforded to the process. It is reproduced here without prejudice for historical and information purposes only.

In formulating the Grant team going forward, we as the bid team have been particularly mindful of the challenges faced by CVAA as a membership organisation in delivering to this contract; namely we believe that we must demonstrate that the grant team would provide absolute objectivity and would be influenced only by the aims of the grants rather than by any pre-existing loyalties to CVAA members. We considered whether it would be beneficial to set up a subsidiary of CVAA for the purpose of administering the grant, but have concluded that this is not necessary, if we can demonstrate that we have in place an independent grant panel. Similarly, we are aware that as an organisation the scale of the grants far exceeds any previous grants administered and therefore we have sought to bring in expertise to strengthen this area.

We would also wish to advise CVAA Board that in formulating the delivery model we have focussed on three key factors

- *Overall marketing and recruitment of more adopters*
- *Recruitment of adopters able to parent overall the range of children including those deemed harder to place*
- *Workforce capacity issues*

The model is founded on CVAA's:

- long and trusted relationship with all VAAs in England
- incorporation with the Consortium of Adoption Support Agencies (CASA)
- proven track record of monitoring and reporting on the performance of individual VAAs and the VAA sector collectively
- deep understanding of the root cause obstacles and key enablers to effective delivery in adoption recruitment and support services
- proven ability to increase the capacity of the sector – Martin Narey commitment to expand by 20% year-on-year for three years
- demonstrable competence in distributing the Government VAA expansion grant of £1 million which has already seen growth in the number of adopters approved by the VAA sector
- not-for-profit status which ensures all of the grant works hard for adoption
- commitment to ensuring sustainability and longevity
- determination to continue to have a positive impact on the sector's current approach to recruitment and by introducing innovative ways of working
- effective relationships with senior figures from the core organisations within the adoption system in England which ensures grant monies will drive growth in the VAA sector and the adoption system as a whole
- proven partnership working with the Department for Education
- commitment to ensuring specialist and independent governance and oversight through the specifically established Independent Grant Management Panel
- existing relationship with the DfE sponsored Business Support Provider

The model is managed and governed by:

- a Grant Management Team (see CVs):
 - CVAA CEO (TBC) – Head of Grant Administration
 - Colin Prickett – Grant Manager
 - Christine Prickett – Grant Administrator
 - Sophia Parker – Innovation Consultant. On behalf of Nesta, Sophia has recently authored Call for Action: 10 Lessons for Local Authority Innovators.
- an Independent Grant Management Panel:
 - **Individual with an Innovation Remit and proposed Chair.** The Innovation Unit is a not-for-profit social enterprise committed to using the power of innovation to solve social challenges.
 - **Individual with a Performance Management Remit.** We have agreement from a former DCS who also worked in performance management with the PM's and Treasury units.
 - **Individual with Grant management remit.** We are approaching the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, one of the largest independent grant-making foundations in the UK.
 - **KPMG Partner (TBC) – Accountancy Remit.** KPMG in the UK is a leading provider of professional services including audit, tax and advisory. As part of KPMG Europe LLP they are part of the largest integrated accounting firm in Europe.
 - **Individual with LA adoption service delivery remit;** we propose approaching ADCS.
 - **CVAA CEO (TBC) – VAA service delivery remit.**

The delivery model consists of: (note that more detail will be provided in the actual submission)

<p>Grant Round 1 (Up to £8.5m distributed)</p>	<p>% for specified initiatives with a focus on innovation across the whole sector % in growth units for individual VAAs and consortia bids, focussed on specified numbers of adopters to meet needs overall of the full range of children waiting (front loaded and then payments against agreed milestones) % in booster grants for smaller providers against plan to increase adopter numbers</p>
<p>Grant Round 2 (Up to £4m distributed + any surplus from Round 1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For individual VAAs and VAA led consortia to deliver specified numbers of adopters able to meet the needs of children waiting including the needs of children harder to place (front loaded and then payments against agreed milestones)
<p>Grant Round 3 (Any surplus from Round 2)</p>	<p>Round 3 will only be necessary where there is unallocated grant funding remaining from Round 2</p>

Rationale for the number of grant rounds:

- The lead in times to achieve growth in the number of adopters necessitate that as much funding as possible should be made available to the sector as early as possible
- Each grant round costs money so the number of grant rounds should be kept to a minimum
- New entrants will not necessarily be well placed to bid in round 1.
- Some existing VAAs will not necessarily be best placed to bid in round 1. They will be able to benefit from the DfE sponsored business support and ongoing CVAA support to be more prepared to bid in round 2
- Some VAAs will do well with their Round 1 funding and will be able to bid again to build on their success

Date: 29.11.13



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A Brief History of the CVAA



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Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies



Charity Registration Number: 1108318

Company Registration Number: 5275491

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