

Presentation from British Association for Adoption & Fostering

## Adoption in the United Kingdom



**International Symposium on Adoption**

**The Nippon Foundation (Japan)**

**15<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

**Chris Christophides (BAAF Consultant)**

© British Association for Adoption  
& Fostering 2013

Should you wish to reproduce  
or adapt or exhibit in public this  
material, please get in touch with  
the Marketing & Communications  
Department, BAAF, Saffron House,  
6-10 Kirby Street, London, EC1N  
8TS  
Email [mail@baaf.org.uk](mailto:mail@baaf.org.uk)

Registered charity number  
275689 (England and Wales)  
SC039337 (Scotland)

**BAAF**  
ADOPTION  
& FOSTERING

# BAAF overview

---

- A nationwide charity that works to improve outcomes for children in care by finding them a new families
- A unique hub of expertise and knowledge that leads the local government and voluntary sector through independent advice, support and information for everyone involved in fostering and adoption
- 7 regional and country offices in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to provide services to meet the needs of some of the UK's most vulnerable children and young people
- An innovator and challenger of existing practice amongst local and central government to improve outcomes for children in care

# What problems are we addressing?

---

- An increasing number of children are being taken into care, and there is a chronic shortage of foster carers and adopters
- There are over 91,000 children in care in the UK
- Around 4,000 children are waiting to be adopted each year
- An estimated 9,000 more foster carers and 2,000 – 3,000 more adopters are needed each year

# Why do children come into care?

---

- Abuse or neglect
- Family crisis/family dysfunction
- Absent parenting
- Child's disability
- Parent's illness or disability
- Socially unacceptable behaviour

# Children in care are

---

- 14 times more likely to become homeless
- 66 times more likely to have their own children taken into care
- 5 times as likely to develop a mental disorder of some kind in comparison to other children; 42% of looked after children between the ages of five and ten had a mental disorder of some kind
- 40% of prisoners aged 18-20 have spent more than two years in care before prison
- 15% of children in care got five A\*-C grades at GCSE compared to 70% of the general population
- 1,500 children in care were moved more than 20 times in one year
- 72% of children come into care due to abuse, neglect or family dysfunction

# What do the children need?

---

- Security and stability
- Secure attachments – time to bond with you
- Intensive nurturing
- Time to recover
- Openness about adoption / reasons why the child came into care
- A positive attitude towards contact with the birth family
- Flexibility about the “type” of child that one could parent

# What is adoption in the UK?

---

- Adoption is a tried and tested way of providing a permanent family for children who cannot live with their birth parents
- A legal procedure in which all the parental responsibility is transferred to the adopters
- Lifelong consequences for the child and the adoptive parents
- Once an adoption order has been granted it cannot be reversed except in extremely rare circumstances

# Background

---

- The Adoption of Children Act 1926
- The Child Adoption Committee, 1925, anticipated that there would always be more people wishing 'to relinquish children by way of adoption' than wanting children



# Background

---

- But adoption proved popular –
  - for the permanent and secure transfer of orphans to relatives or childless couples
  - and as a device whereby single mothers could save their child much of the then very real stigma and legal disadvantage of illegitimacy
  - It was suggested in 1949 that as many as one third of adoptions of illegitimate children were adoptions by the birth mother (Lowe N & Murch M, 1999)

# Adoption numbers

---

- The number of orders made annually rose, with fluctuations, from nearly 3,000 in 1927 to a high of almost 25,000 in 1968.
- More controversially, step-parent adoption – the adoption of their own children by single or previously married mothers together with their spouses – also proved increasingly attractive
- From 1970 onwards, the number of babies available for adoption dropped dramatically
- The number of orders made annually fell to 10,690 in 1980 and to a low of 4,387 in 1998 before the slight but fluctuating rises since (5,354 in 2003)

# Responses to drop in number of babies available for adoption

---

- Firstly couples with means, determined on the adoption of baby, started to look to developing societies and also in Eastern Europe through a largely unregulated process
- Secondly, the adoption of children unable to return to their birth families and/or with disabilities from local authority care, i.e. 'hard-to-place' children.
- The placement of these children, many of whom had high levels of need, often lacked adequate pre- and post adoption support, resulting in high levels of disruption and many, particularly, older children returning to local authority care

# Adoption Act 1976

---

- The 1976 Act incorporated parts of the Adoption Act 1958, and the radical reforms based on the recommendations of the Houghton Committee (1972)
- Such was the delay in implementation and the pace of practice change, that by the time the 1976 Act finally came into force in 1988 it was predicated on an exclusive model of adoption that had virtually ceased to exist, and was already out of date.
- The 1976 Act failed to recognise the needs of older children and their adoptive families in relation to
  - maintaining continuing contact with significant people from the past and
  - the need for support not only before but also well beyond the making of an adoption order

# 1989-1993:reform gaining momentum

- Review of adoption law announced during the Children Act debates in June 1989, to look at developments since last major review in 1972
- DH-organised Adoption Law Review report published Oct 1992
- Government criticises agencies for lacking 'common sense' on age, race, and role of single parents in adoption
- White Paper 1993

# Presentation from British Association for Adoption & Fostering

## Adoption & Children Act 2002

### England

(Came into effect on 30<sup>th</sup>  
December 2005)

What's new? - the  
essentials

© British Association for Adoption  
& Fostering 2013

Should you wish to reproduce  
or adapt or exhibit in public this  
material, please get in touch with  
the Marketing & Communications  
Department, BAAF, Saffron House,  
6-10 Kirby Street, London, EC1N  
8TS  
Email [mail@baaf.org.uk](mailto:mail@baaf.org.uk)

Registered charity number  
275689 (England and Wales)  
SC039337 (Scotland)



# Placement framework (1)

---

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 has brought about key changes in the following areas:

- Placement for adoption: this can now only take place if parents consent **or** if the local authority obtains a placement order (S. 21-24)
- Consent (S.19 and 20): the process by which this is given by a parent or guardian (CAFCASS officer) – and the actions required of the agency where withdrawal of consent occurs

# Placement orders

---

- Apply for placement order when applying for a care order (if do not have consent)
- Need to satisfy the threshold criteria
- Care order granted, and then suspended
- Birth parents, local authority and adopters all to share PR until the child is adopted
- Last until child adopted, or 18, or married at 16



# Placement framework (2)

---

- **Adoption reports:** who can write them.
- **The Child's Permanence Report**
- **Contact:** this is now to be considered at each stage
- **Parental responsibility:** where it has consent or a placement order, the agency has parental responsibility (PR) for the child and may restrict the PR of the child's parent, guardian or, where the child is placed, the prospective adopter

# Preparing, assessing and approving prospective adopters

---

- The 2002 Act together with the new Regulations and Guidance have brought about the following key changes concerning the assessment of prospective adopters:
  - Amendment of some timescales involved in the application and assessment process
  - Improved provision for joint applications to adopt by unmarried couples

# Preparing, assessing and approving prospective adopters (2)

---

- Introduction of a brief prospective adopter's report
- Clarification about panel recommendation and panel advice
- Introduction of approval review
- Some changes to access to and timescales for the Independent Review Mechanism.
- Changes to the prospective adopter's report

# Matching and proposing a placement

- The AAR and the Guidance have made changes in the following areas:
  - Timescales, speeding up the process
  - Preparation of the adoption placement report
  - Discussion with the proposed family.

# Placement and Reviews

---

- Much of the Regulation in this area – AAR 35 – stems from good practice.
  - There are now detailed requirements for the Placement Planning Meeting, and the Guidance specifies the purpose and content of this meeting
  - An Adoption Placement Plan must be formulated
  - The child may be placed with the prospective adopter, subject to certain requirements being met.
  - Child needs to be in placement for 10 weeks before applicants can put in application to adopt

# Placement and Reviews (2)

---

- Visits and reviews

- Regulations governing visits and reviews are now more comprehensive

- Roles

- A new role for independent reviewing officers (IROs) to review children placed for adoption.
- Their responsibilities are specified, as are their required qualifications
- New requirements for the preparation of reports about visits and reviews – which now applies to all children authorised to be placed for adoption.

# Intercountry adoption - brings it more in line with domestic adoption

---

- Building on changes already introduced as a result of the Adoption (Intercountry Aspects) Act 1999, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 has made further changes to intercountry adoption in the following areas:
  - Bringing children into the UK in connection with adoption
  - Increased involvement in matching process by local authority/adoption agency
  - Access to Adoption Support Services
  - Taking children out of the UK in connection with adoption
  - A new procedure for obtaining agreement to remove a child from the UK for adoption outside the British Islands.

# Adoption Support Services

---

- Support to assist in cases of disruption is now included as a prescribed support service
- The role of Adoption Support Services Advisor
- The placing authority is now responsible for the assessment and provision of adoption support services for three years after the adoption order (regular payments agreed before adoption order and contact until 18)



# Adoption Support Services (2)

---

- Regulations and guidance sets out the circumstances in which a local authority may or must disregard the means test in relation to providing financial support
- Children adopted from abroad are now specifically entitled to be assessed in relation to therapeutic services
- Intercountry adopters and their children are now specifically entitled to be assessed in relation to services to ensure the continuation of the adoptive relationship

# Access to information - Pre-commencement

---

## Pre-commencement

- In respect of any adoption which took place before 30 December 2005, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 has brought about key changes in the following areas:
  - Adopted adults and their adult birth relatives have a new right to request a regulated intermediary service
  - Intermediary agencies cannot disclose identifying information about a subject without having first obtained their informed consent (the subject could be an adopted adult or an adult birth relative of that person)

# Access to information - Pre-commencement

---

- Adopted people can register either a qualified or absolute veto with the appropriate agency
- Adoption Agencies or Adoption Support Agencies may charge a fee to any person, other than an adopted person, to cover any reasonable costs they incur in processing an application for the disclosure of information
- Adopted people and birth relatives can now register a wish for no contact on the Registrar General's Adoption Contact Register
- Written information about counselling services must be provided

# Access to adoption information – Prior to 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005

- Applications can only be accepted from adopted people and birth relatives who are over the age of 18

# Post-commencement

---

- In relation to any adoption which takes place on or after 30 December 2005, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 brought about the following key changes:
  - The adoption agency is the main gateway for access to information, including birth record information

# Post-commencement

---

- There is now a systematic framework within which adoption agencies are required to consider certain issues – such as the adopted person's welfare – before making a determination as to whether to disclose protected (identifying) information
- Arrangements for the retention, storage and transfer of adoption records (Section 56 information) have been updated
- Adopted people, birth relatives and other people involved in an adoption (i.e. former foster carers) may apply to the appropriate adoption agency for the disclosure of protected information

# Post-commencement

---

- People can request an independent review where the adoption agency makes a 'qualifying determination' about the disclosure of information under Section 61 of the Act
- Adoption agencies are required to provide written information about the availability of counselling and the services they provide to any person who applies to the agency for the disclosure of information

# Special guardianship

---

- Any child previously looked after will cease to be looked after on the making of this order.
- A special guardian may exercise PR to the exclusion of all others with PR, apart from another special guardian
- The special guardian will have clear responsibility for all the day-to-day decisions about caring for the child or young person, and his or her upbringing
- A special guardian can also appoint a guardian in the event of death



## Special guardianship (2)

---

- Special guardians cannot agree to change the child's surname or live abroad for more than 3 months without the agreement of other people with parental responsibility or leave of the court
- Special guardians cannot “consent” to the adoption of the child; birth parents retain the right to consent or not to the child's adoption

# Adoption panels and agency decisions

---

- Although the basic structure and function of adoption panels and the agency role remain the same, the regulations and guidance have brought about a number of changes to adoption panel arrangements in the following areas:
  - The detail of membership, and quorum (5)
  - Changes in the role of the agency adviser to the panel
  - Annual review of panel members

# Adoption panels and agency decisions (2)

---

- When considering the proposed placement of a child with a particular prospective adopter, the panel will be required to consider and may give advice on:
  - any restriction of the parent's or prospective adopter's parental responsibility
  - proposals for provision of adoption support services
  - proposals for contact arrangements

# Adoption panels and agency decisions

## (3)

---

- Where the panel recommends the prospective adopter is suitable, it may consider and give advice re number of children, age range, sex, likely needs and background and needs to consider strengths and weaknesses (adoptive capacity) to inform matching
- The agency is not restricted by this advice

# Adoption panels and matching (4)

Panel must consider, and may give advice on:-

- the provision of adoption support
- Arrangements re contact
- Whether PR or any parent, guardian, or prospective adopter should be restricted and how much

# Agency decision maker

---

- Must take into account recommendations of panel
- Should consult minutes and reports presented to panel
- Have particular regard to panel's reasons in making recommendations
- If the decision maker is minded not to accept the panel's recommendation, s/he should discuss this with another senior person in the agency who is not a member of panel.

# Adoption

---

- Who can adopt?
- Adoption basics: age, housing, work, experience, sexuality, relationships, intercountry adoption
- How do people apply to adopt?
  - Finding out more
  - Finding an agency
- The adoption process
  - Preparation
  - The Home Study
  - Panel
- Being matched with a child
- Adoption support

# Underpinning themes of the Adoption Reform Agenda (2013)

- To reduce delay for children whose care plan is adoption
- To reduce delays and ambiguities in the recruitment, assessment and preparation of adopters
- To ensure that prospective adopters receive a consistent and coherent service
- To develop social work skills in analytic and evidence based report writing



# Adoption Reform 2013: Delay

---

- More moves in foster care increase instability and more broken relationships.
- Can lead to risks in emotional development & behavioural problems
- Higher likelihood of disruptions
- Possible challenges to care plans in court
- Reduction in chances of being adopted by 20% for each year of delay
- Child's self esteem affected

# Rationale

---

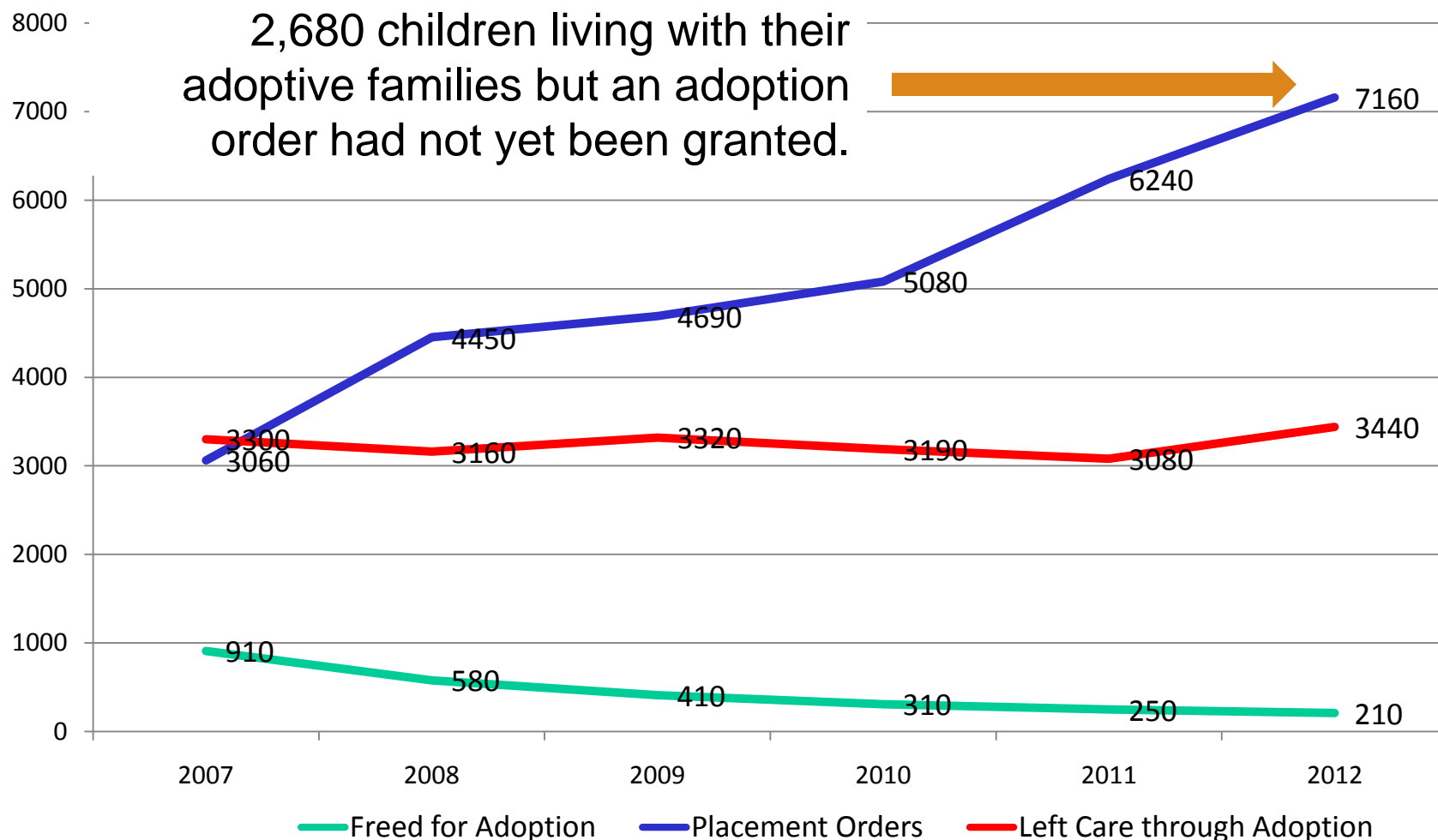
- The Government agenda is based on a range of research, evidence from an expert working group and statistical information
- Julie Selwyn 'Costs and outcomes of non-infant adoptions', BAAF 2006
- Ward, Brown and Westlake 'Safeguarding Babies and Very Young Children from Abuse and Neglect', JKP, 2012
- Farmer et al 'An investigation of family finding and matching in adoption, 2010

# Statistics in the UK

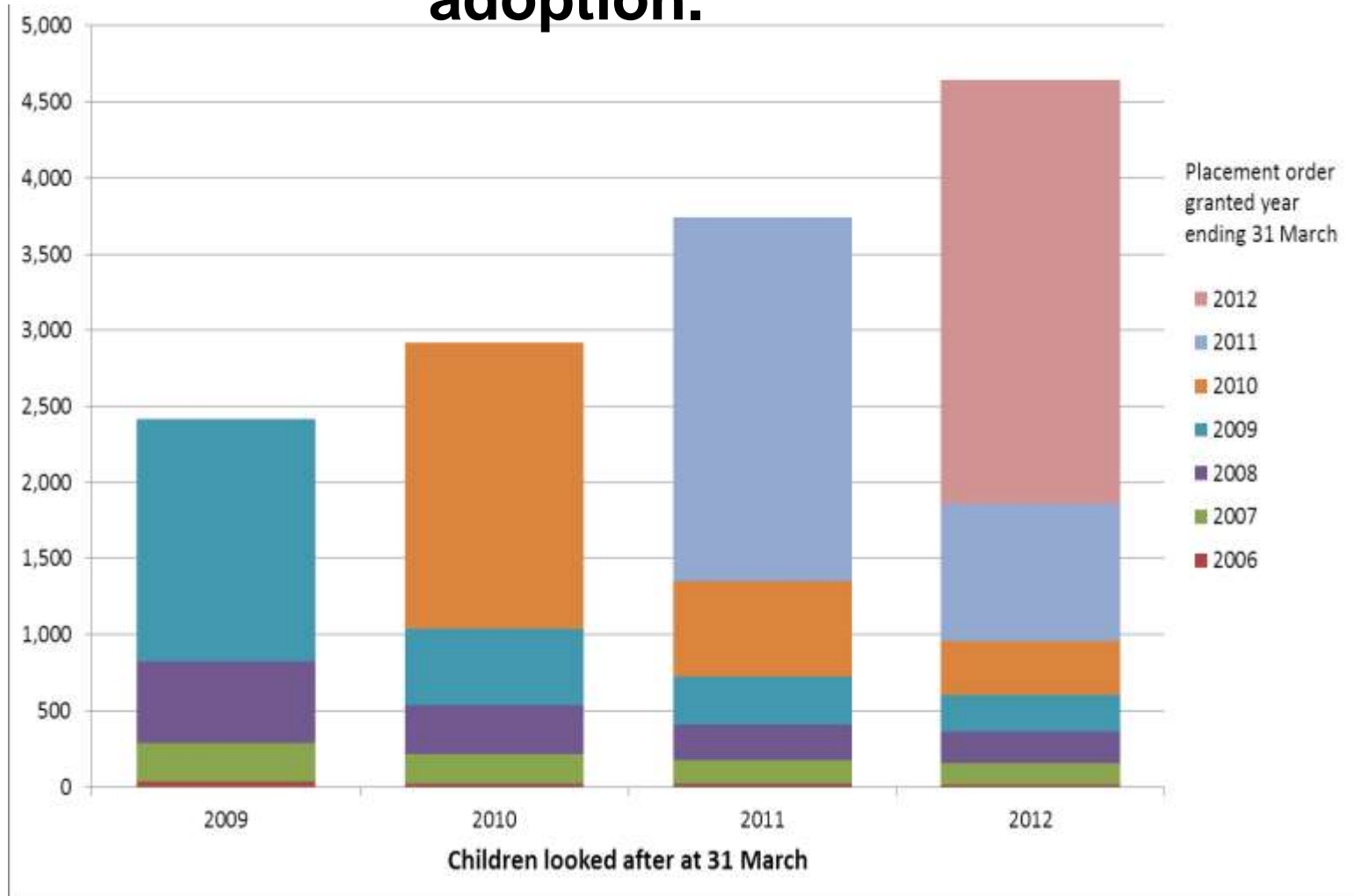
---

- Please see the attached document in your packs

# The ever widening gap!!!

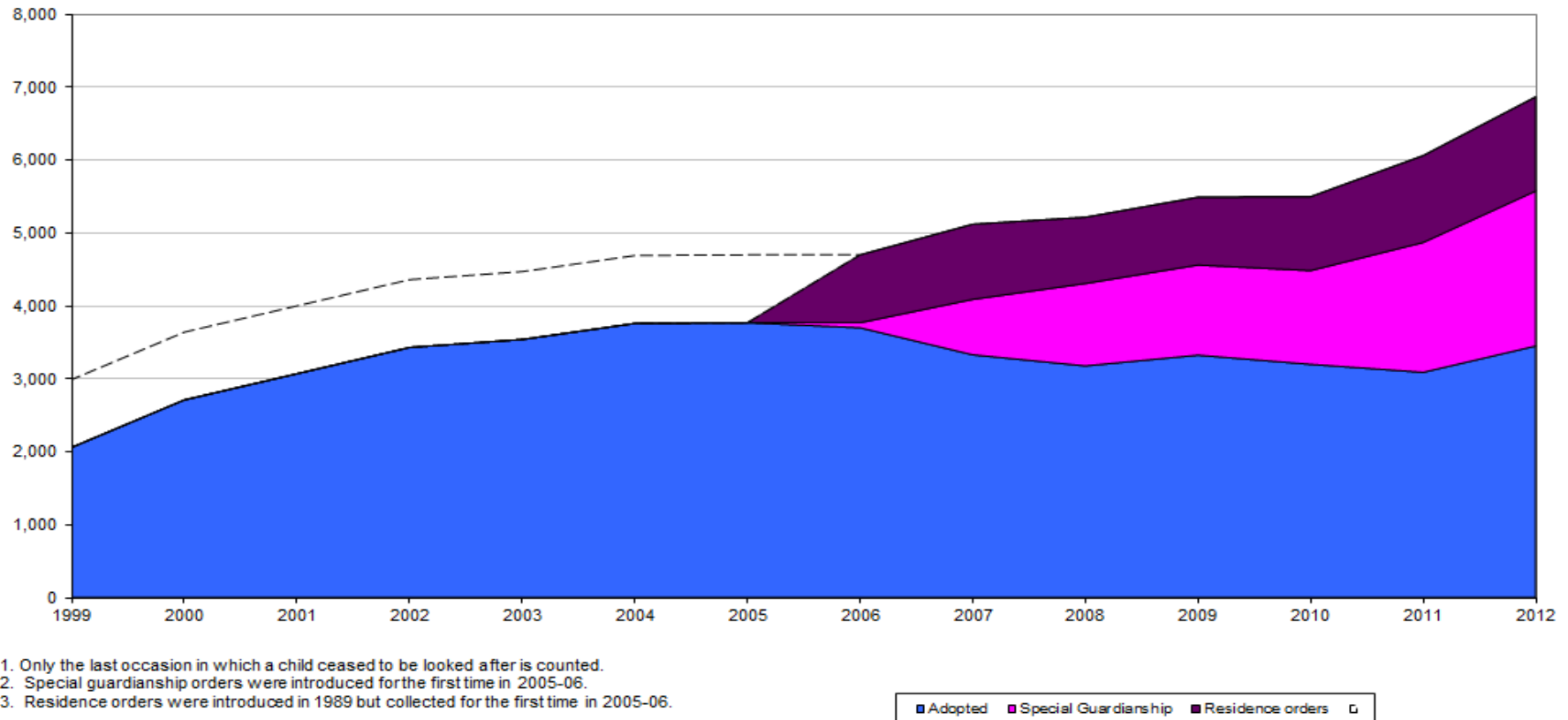


# Children on a placement order at 31 March by year in which order was granted - children not placed for adoption.



# Children who ceased to be looked after through adoption<sup>1</sup>, special guardianship<sup>2</sup> and residence orders<sup>3</sup>

## — 1999 to 2012



# Keeping the child at the centre

---



# Adoption Reform programme

---

- A two stage training and assessment process for adopters - implemented from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2013
- Scorecards
- Adoption Support - Adopter Passport now implemented
- National Gateway for Adoption - now operational as First4Adoption
- National Adopter Recruitment Forum



# **Adoption Reform Agenda: Tackling Delay**

---

M. Gove 2012

- To reduce adoptions delayed in order to achieve a perfect or near perfect match between adoptive parents and the child
- Swifter use of the Adoption Register in order to find the right adopters for a child wherever they may live
- Encourage all local authorities to seek to place children with their potential adopters in anticipation of the court's placement order

# Adoption Reform: Tackling Delay

- Speed up the adopter assessment process, so that 2 months are spent in training and information gathering, followed by 4 months of full assessment
- Fast track process for those who have adopted before or who are foster carers wanting to adopt a child in their care
- National Gateway to adoption as a consistent source of advice & information

# Training Programme BAAF and DfE

- Phase One - Adopter Assessment Process
- Phase Two - Foster to Adopt, Concurrency and Care Planning
- Phase Three - Effective Report Writing in Child Care
- Phase Four - Adoption Support

# Customer Care Standards First 4

## Adoption

---

- To ensure that there is a positive welcome for all who may be able to care for children in the care system
- To increase the number of prospective adopters able to meet the needs of children in care
- To speed up the process of adoption whilst ensuring that it is effective and supportive for children and adults
- To improve customer service

# What we do to address challenges

---

- BAAF is working with local agencies to share best practice – how to encourage people to come forward and cherish and support them when they do
- A national approach is needed to shift attitudes and ‘normalise’ adoption as a natural and positive choice for many who wish to experience the joys and challenges that come with parenthood, but for a variety of reasons don’t conceive naturally. Adoption needs powerful and positive promotion at every level to convert more of the 450,000 google searches a month into prospective adopters
- Recent research into attitudes to adoption shows that people come forward when encouraged through meeting people who’ve adopted and hearing their stories. Word of mouth recommendation, buddies and mentors all work well
- Adoption needs to be promoted by as many organisations and individuals as possible as a natural way to create a family. It needs to be mainstreamed, not hidden away

# National Adoption Week

<http://nationaladoptionweek.org.uk/>



# Be My Parent Online

## www.bemyparent.org.uk



Text size: A A A

Go

HOME

ABOUT US

INFO FOR FAMILIES

INFO FOR AGENCIES

FEATURES

CONTACT US



LOG IN

Email

Password \*

Log in

[Register here](#)

Home /

### FREE MEDIA REFERRAL FOR NAW!

Profile children for free in the mainstream media during National Adoption Week!



START SEARCHING

### TODAY'S CHILDREN



**JORDAN 8 years**

**DEON 6 years**

**T-JAY 3 years**

are brothers who are described as "wee gems". They can all play well together and love playing outside. Jordan is active and loves football and school. Deon is cheeky and helpful with a good sense of fun. T-Jay is delightful, cheery and loves the trampoline. The boys have all progressed since joining their foster family

and look forward to finding a 'forever family'. **Needing: adoption**

Get to know me

© BAAF 2013

**BAAF**  
ADOPTION  
& FOSTERING



# Adoption Register

## www.adoptionregister.org.uk



- Info for agencies
- About the Register
- Info for adopters
- News
- Useful links
- Contact us
- Social Workers login and use the online service
- Exchange Days

### National Adoption Register Exchange Day for Black and Minority Ethnic Adopters

We will be holding the above event in London on Tuesday November 16th 2010. We will be featuring children who have been referred to the Register and there will be a number of Local Authorities profiling their own children with Social Workers available to give further information. If you are...[read more >](#)

### Useful links

- [Social Worker login to online system](#)
- [Our full guidance for social workers \(pdf\)](#)
- [Our full guidance for adopters \(pdf\)](#)
- [Download adobe acrobat reader](#)

### Annual Report 2008 Published

The Adoption Register Annual Report 2008 includes statistics about referrals made to and placements made through the Register in our fourth year of operation as well as articles about the people involved in the process. Click on the link to view the report in pdf format [www.adoptionregister.org.uk/files/annualreport08.pdf](http://www.adoptionregister.org.uk/files/annualreport08.pdf) or the Welsh language version in pdf format [www.adoptionregister.org.uk/files/annualreport08-wales.pdf](http://www.adoptionregister.org.uk/files/annualreport08-wales.pdf). If you would like a hard copy please ring us on 0845 450 3931 or e-mail [mail@adoptionregister.org.uk](mailto:mail@adoptionregister.org.uk)

### Children Matched Through the Register

**1262** children have been matched at panel with families through the Adoption Register since December 2004:

Welcome to the Adoption Register for England and Wales.



The Adoption Register for England and Wales has been operated by the [British Association for Adoption and Fostering \(BAAF\)](#) on behalf of the [Department for Education](#) and the [Welsh Assembly Government](#) since December 1st 2004.

The Adoption Register works with adoption agencies and adoption consortia to make sure that all children and families have the best chance of finding a suitable match. Its main purpose is to find adoptive homes for those children for whom Local Authorities cannot find a home locally.

© BAAF 2013

**BAAF**  
ADOPTION  
& FOSTERING



# Adoption & Inter-Agency Fee

---

Please see BAAF paper, titled 'Inter-Agency Fees', 2013

# Bibliography

---

- Lowe N and Murch M, 'Supporting adoption, BAAF, 1999
- Selwyn J, 'Costs and outcomes of non-infant adoptions', BAAF 2006
- Selwyn J, et al 'Adoption and the Inter-Agency Fee', Bristol and Loughborough Universities, Research Paper, DCSF, 2009

## Bibliography cont'd

---

- Farmer E, et al 'An investigation of family finding and matching in adoption', Briefing Paper, Department for Education, 2010
- Ward H, Brown R and Westlake D, 'Safeguarding Babies and Very Young Children from Abuse and Neglect', JKP, 2012

# Useful website resources

---

- <http://www.baaf.org.uk/info>
- <http://www.first4adoption.org.uk/>
- <http://www.bemyparent.org.uk/>
- <http://www.adoptionregister.org.uk/site/page.aspx?pid=48>
- <http://www.baaf.org.uk/ourwork/activitydays>
- <http://www.education.gov.uk/search/results?q=adoption>

# THANK YOU

---

Chris Christophides

[chris.christophides@baaf.org.uk](mailto:chris.christophides@baaf.org.uk)