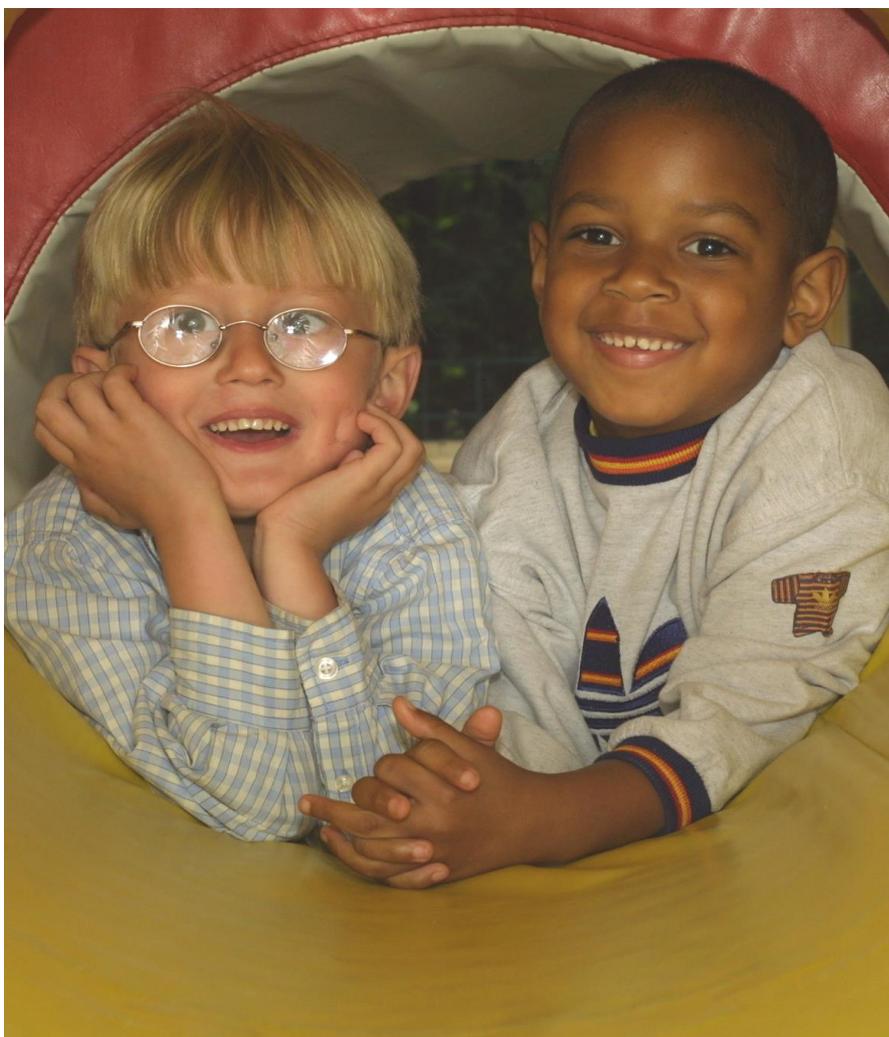


Adoption & Permanent Families Service – London

Statement of Purpose for Adoption and Foster Care



Adoption & Permanent Families Service – London February 2016
Statement of Purpose for Adoption and Foster Care

The Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (miscellaneous amendments) Regulations 2003 – Schedule 1, Draft Adoption Regulations July 2014; Fostering Service (England) Regulations, 2011

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CORAM ADOPTION AND PERMANENT FAMILIES SERVICE (APFS)

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

1. Aims and Objectives

Coram believes that children are best able to enjoy close and enduring relationships and to develop their potential within a family setting. This ethos is underpinned by Article 21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; that every child has a right to family life which, if it cannot be provided by the family of origin should be provided by a permanent alternative family. We recognise that those who have suffered separations and adversity may require additional support at different times in childhood and beyond, and that knowing about their birth family history and understanding the reasons for the separation is important in developing a positive sense of identity. Coram's aims and objectives are therefore:

- To match and place children who are looked after by Local Authorities and who are referred to Coram, in families where they will feel that they 'belong' on a permanent basis and be encouraged to make secure attachments. This may be by adoption, foster for adoption, long term foster care, placement with birth relatives or with concurrent planning carers;
- To recruit, prepare, assess and support adopters and carers from a diverse range of backgrounds who have the ability to meet the needs of children referred to Coram by Local authorities;
- To provide post placement and post adoption support to children and their new families where Coram has been involved in making a placement;
- To provide access to information, counselling, intermediary services and support as appropriate to adults whose lives have been affected by adoption or other permanent placements, including adopted adults and their birth relatives and those who grew up in the care of Coram and were placed in foster or residential care;
- To work in partnership with Local Authorities to improve permanence planning by reducing drift and delay within the care system. This includes delivering adoption services on behalf of some local authorities and promoting concurrent planning and foster 4 adoption placements;
- To promote best practice in permanence planning for children by undertaking research and disseminating information to the professional network in Local Authorities, the courts, mental health services etc;
- To establish innovative projects and disseminate best practice

2. Principles

The work of the Adoption and Permanent Families Service is informed by the principles of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption and for Foster Care:

- The needs, rights and welfare of children are our paramount concern.
- We welcome all prospective adopters and other carers and treat them with respect.
- We recognise the lifelong implications of adoption for all parties and offer comprehensive support services to adopters, carers, and adopted children and adults.
- We offer birth parents and relatives a support service where appropriate, including access to records and intermediary services where the placement was made by Coram or where Coram was involved in the placement. (In many situations direct support to birth relatives of adopted children is the Local Authority's responsibility);
- Coram's Concurrent Planning Project supports the parents of children in placement and works towards rehabilitation of the children if that is achievable within the children's timescales. An aspect of that work is the provision of supervised contact and coaching to help the parents develop their parenting skills.
- We work within an equal opportunities framework and value diversity. We recruit adopters and carers who reflect the ethnic, religious, language and racial backgrounds of the children needing placement in so far as that is possible.
- The children we place are amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised children in society. We champion their right to family life and to enjoyment of health care, leisure facilities, education and therapeutic support.
- We welcome families who can prioritise children's needs, and who can make a commitment to the child on a permanent basis and persevere through difficult times.
- We believe that many different kinds of family structure (eg single parents, couples who are heterosexual or gay, married, in civil partnerships or unmarried) can provide the kind of nurture and parenting required by children who have suffered separation from their birth family and possibly adversity such as abuse, neglect or exposure to substances whilst in utero.
- We understand that birth parents and relatives of the children we place experience a profound loss, and that they may wish to make a contribution to their child's life, for example by providing photographs or a letter for the child to read in later life. We advocate a spirit of openness so that children grow up with knowledge and understanding of their birth family. Where it is in the children's interest, we support direct or indirect contact with birth relatives.
- We have a rigorous policy to safeguard children's welfare and implement Coram's Safeguarding Children Policy.

3. Services Provided

Coram's Adoption and Permanent Families Service operates two Branches and in addition has Service Level Agreements with the London Boroughs of Harrow and Redbridge, Thurrock Council, City of London and with Kent County Council. In addition Coram and Cambridgeshire County Council have created a new VAA, Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption, to provide a comprehensive adoption service for children referred by Cambridgeshire CC and for local residents.

- Coram Capital Adoption*** – an adoption placement and support team serving adopters within approximately 50 miles of central London. The London team includes a sub-office in South London. CCA welcomes applicants from all sections of the community in keeping with Coram's inclusive ethos. CCA also provides a recruitment, assessment and support service for prospective/adopters from Harrow, Redbridge, Thurrock and City of London and has responsibility for finding appropriate families for the children referred by those LAs.

- b. *Coram Adoption East Midlands* based in Shepshed, serving adopters within approximately one hour's travelling distance of the office base in North Leicestershire which is close to Junction 23 of the M1.

Both Branches:

- These branches recruit, prepare and approve adopters and place children who are looked after within the public care system. Very occasionally a family may be approved as long term foster carers for a child for whom adoption is not appropriate, e.g. for cultural reasons.
- Both Branches provide a range of post adoption support services to families, children and adult adoptees where the agency was originally involved in making the placement. Access to information, intermediary services and counselling are offered to adopted adults and birth relatives seeking information about or contact with their adopted relative, if Coram was involved in making the original placement.
- The London Branch also provides access to information and counselling to adults who grew up in Coram's care and were placed in foster care or residential care.

- c. *Concurrent Planning and Foster4Adoption* – the Coram Concurrent Planning Programme (CCPP) in London operates in partnership with the London Boroughs of Camden, Islington, Wandsworth, Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Bromley, Redbridge and Southwark and with Thurrock Council. The CCPP offers a specialist service to children aged 0-2 years who are subject of care proceedings and where on the basis of the past history, it is likely that the children will need a permanent placement outside the birth family. In all cases there is still a prospect of the birth parents or other relatives being able to provide appropriate care within the child's timescales. The overall aim is to prevent drift and delay in achieving permanence for these children and to reduce placement moves by placing them with carers who are dually approved as foster carers and as adopters (ie concurrent planning carers or foster for adopt carers).

Coram's concurrent planning programme is embedded within the London Branch and is being extended to the East Midlands Branch.

- During care proceedings the concurrent planning carers are the children's foster carers. They bring the children for contact regularly at Coram and spend some time with the children's birth parents, helping to facilitate the child's attachment to his/her parent or relative.
- If the outcome of the care proceedings is that the child should return to birth parents/relatives, the CCPP will facilitate this, supporting all the parties.
- If the outcome of care proceedings is that the child cannot return to birth parents/relatives, s/he will then remain with the carers and be adopted by them. In this way the child's attachments are protected whatever the outcomes (a win/win situation for the child).
- If adoption is the outcome, Coram provides adoption and post adoption support to all parties.

- d. *Concurrent Planning Subscription Scheme:* Coram offers a subscription scheme to Local Authorities and VAAs who want to develop concurrent planning /Foster4Adoption programmes based on provision of dually approved adoptive /foster carers and which provide appropriate supervised contact. The scheme has several levels of membership and offers packages of training and consultation as well as attendance at three Network days pa.

- e. ***Adoption Support Services including support to placements by other agencies:*** Coram has developed parenting skills programmes for adopters and creative therapy for adopted children which are available in London, the East Midlands, Cambridgeshire and other regional centres. Coram also offers MBT for adoptive families, an intervention developed by the Anna Freud Centre based on application of attachment theory, and adapted for the needs of adopted children and their Parents in collaboration with Coram. Initial evaluation of this programme is very positive.

These Adoption Support Services may be commissioned by Local Authorities or by adoptive parents where Coram was not involved in making the placement. All adoption support services will be subject to individual agreements, and may be funded by the Adoption Support Fund.

Coram offers open door access to support to families and children placed via Coram which continues post-order. This may include further life story work, assistance with contact, advocacy and referral to other agencies for specialist support.

A number of adopted adolescents and young adults from Coram's London Branch have taken part in the '*Adoptables*' programme, funded by the Queen's Trust. This is a three year participation programme which aims to give older adopted young people and young adopted adults a voice in policy and practice development. They have developed material for use in schools in collaboration with Coram Life Education. This material will help increase understanding of adopted children's circumstances and reduce the stigma and bullying which many children suffer.

- f. ***Coram's Partnerships with Local Authorities: Coram Capital Adoption (CCA*)***
Coram has developed a 'hub and spoke' model of adoption partnership work with a number of London Councils (Harrow, City of London and Redbridge) and with Thurrock Council. CCA* may become a sub- region within a future London Regional Adoption Agency as proposed under current government legislation. This model devolves to Coram the responsibility for recruitment and assessment of adopters for the children looked after by/ in care to partner LAs who need adoption, together with provision of support in family finding and early permanence planning for children who are looked after in those LAs. Concurrent planning and other approaches to early permanence planning are also promoted.

Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption: In April 2014 Coram established a new VAA registered with Ofsted as Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption (CCA). CCA was established following a two year partnership between Cambridgeshire County Council's (CCC) Adoption Agency and Coram. This resulted in a significant increase in children adopted and reduced timescales for children's journey to adoption. CCA now operates with delegated adoption functions from CCC for the full range of adoption services including family finding overseen by its own Board of Trustees.

Kent: Coram entered into a service management agreement with Kent as from 1st February 2012, extended to January 2016. Key delivery being to improve permanence planning for Kent's looked after children and increase the number of children for whom adoption is achieved. Adoption placements have increased significantly. Coram now delivers adoption support services for Kent and is involved in designing appropriate early permanence plans for Kent's children.

- g. ***DfE Strategic Grant Project:*** In 2015/16 Coram received a grant from the DfE to develop life storybook training for adopters for social workers and adoptive parents. This has been delivered by Joy Rees in 5 regions: South East, Eastern Region, Midlands, North East and West Country. It has also funded e-learning material for the First 4 Adoption Website which is

accessed by prospective adopters and adopters across the country. In addition Coram has been developing a new intervention in collaboration with the Anna Freud Centre (MBT for adoptive families), based on principles of attachment theory. The grant has also funded the work on a schools programme undertaken by Coram Life Education and the Adoptables (see above), for parenting skills programmes for adopters of adolescents, and creative therapy for adopted children. This work has met its targets, and has developed or embedded several new approaches to supporting adopted children and their families. Following the ending of the grant Coram is continuing the programme of Life Story Book training funded by LAs, and is also continuing to deliver and evaluate MBT which is funded by the Adoption Support Fund

- h. ***National Centre for Early Permanence:*** Coram has been designated the National Centre for Early Permanence and has established a subscription scheme to support local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies to develop concurrent planning programmes and foster/adoption placements. In the last two years 137 babies have been placed in concurrent planning or foster 4 adoption placements by subscribing LAs and VAAs.

4. Conditions of registration

Coram is registered to provide domestic adoption services including adoption support services and birth records and intermediary services, (not inter-county adoption services), and as a fostering service.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

i) Supervision

- All social workers/senior practitioners/ managers receive regular supervision. The frequency depends on the needs of the supervisee, but is generally not less than monthly. Coram has a supervision policy.
- All children's, adopters' and post adoption file entries are read and signed by the relevant manager.
- There is a protocol within the Adoption and Permanent Families Service for regular file audits by managers
- Assessments of prospective adopters are discussed in group supervision sessions as well as in individual supervision, and second opinion visits to adoptive applicants are undertaken if appropriate.
- London Managers receive supervision from the Head of Service.
- The Head of Service and Branch Manager of the East Midlands receive supervision from the Managing Director of Adoption.
- All safeguarding issues or serious concerns about placements are discussed with the Managing Director by the relevant Manager, and are recorded by the social worker. Monitoring reports are submitted to the Managing Director and Coram's Safeguarding Lead.
- All safeguarding concerns are reported to the appropriate statutory authority promptly.
- There is a quarterly return of safeguarding referrals to the Children's Services Committee, including quarterly and annual summaries to review themes and take any action necessary.
- Where children are placed for adoption or foster care, any safeguarding concerns, accidents, serious illnesses of children, children who are missing, deaths of children or complaints, are recorded in the Incident Book, and referred to the Managing Director. Such incidents and concerns are reported to the

Director of Operations. They are carefully investigated to ensure that the children are receiving appropriate care and that any lessons about the future operation of the service are learned.

ii) Adoption & Fostering Panels

- The London Adoption & Fostering Panel meets monthly or more frequently if required.
- The Adoption and Fostering Panel considers all applications from prospective adopters/ foster carers and makes recommendations.
- The Panel considers 'brief reports' on adoption and fostering applications during the assessment if problematic issues arise (e.g. re health or DSB checks).
- The Panel may consider reports on proposed or actual placements for the purpose of information and advice. It does not make recommendations on matches.
- The Panel considers reports on the progress on placements from time to time and gives advice.
- The Panel considers reports on disrupted placements and of any cases referred to the IRM and advises on lessons to be learned.
- The Panel performs a 'quality assurance' function, commenting on reports and the social workers' assessments. This may be in relation to a particular case, or via a six monthly report on the quality of the reports submitted to panel, and whether the statutory timescales have been met. This six monthly report is submitted to Coram's senior managers and trustees, an annual report is submitted each year.
- From time to time the Panel advises the agency on policy and practice.

iii) User Feedback

- Evaluation forms are completed by prospective adopters/ carers who have
 - attended preparation and training groups, and
 - attended the adoption and fostering panels.
- Feedback forms are sent out after the adoption order is granted, and at this stage they are asked to comment on their whole experience with Coram.
- The *children* who are placed with Coram adopters are the responsibility of their placing Local Authority and receive their support from their local authority workers. Coram therefore does not request feedback from them although we do receive informal feedback from time to time.
- Periodically Coram undertakes a user satisfaction survey of adopters or carers over a period of years asking for information on the adoption support they have received and their overall experiences (both positive and negative) of the adoption and concurrent planning process, with an opportunity for them to provide suggestions regarding improvements. These reports are taken to managers for discussion, follow up interviews take place and suggestions are discussed further and if possible implemented within the service.
- Coram is developing the participation of users across the organisation.
- Adopters who received a service from Coram in past years are included as members of the central list of Panel members.
- Selected Coram adopters have served as Governors and members of the Children's Services Committee.
- In London study days and support groups are held for adopters twice yearly on topics of interest to adoptive parents.
- Parenting skills groups for adopters with younger children 3 – 8 years are run twice a year. Adopters complete evaluation forms at the end of these groups.

- The parenting skills group has an excellent crèche, where the children have the opportunity to get to know other adopted children. Every family will have the opportunity to attend these groups.
- Parenting groups for adoptive parents of young people approaching adolescence are run annually. Every family will have the opportunity to attend these groups. Adopters complete evaluation forms at the end of these groups.
- Support groups are held for concurrent planning carers as well as support groups for friends and extended family members of concurrent planning carers.
- Adopters and Concurrent Planning Carers have actively supported Coram's work by participating in media events to promote adoption and concurrent planning and to recruit adopters and carers.
- Compliments/complaints feedback – Coram welcomes feedback from service users on the service they receive, including complaints and compliments. Service users are provided with a leaflet about the complaints process.
- The outcomes of complaints are monitored to ensure that lessons are learned and service provision can be improved as a result. The Coram complaints officer is responsible for collating the quarterly monitoring data for all departments and reporting it to the Senior Management Team, Audit Committee and Children's Services Committee. The reports contain a summary of any service issues and action taken to resolve the situation.
- The Managing Director has a responsibility for monitoring and reviewing all complaints that relate to the service (including informal complaints). She is also required to assess the outcomes of the complaint to determine whether any changes in policies, procedures or working practices are appropriate.

iv) Financial and Business Management

- The Managing Director and Head of Service are responsible for providing:-
 - Monthly finance returns to monitor and ensure that the Service is within budget. This includes statistics of referral and placement trends in order to monitor the ongoing viability of the Service.
 - Monthly output data across the service covering all aspects of the work.
 - Quarterly reports are made to trustees summarising the trends arising from the outputs data; planning is then tailored to changing circumstances.
 - A six monthly analysis of the quality of reports presented to Panel is made to the senior managers and trustees.
 - Annual reports of the work of the Adoption and Fostering Panels are collated and presented to Senior Managers and Trustees.
- The Director of Operations makes a bi-monthly report to the Children's Services Committee regarding any particular issues affecting the Service. Relevant issues arising from this are then presented to the Trustees.
- The Managers of the London Branch meet monthly to discuss issues impacting on the Service including financial and strategic planning, policy, training needs, and learning from safeguarding reports, complaints and difficult cases.
- The Adoption and Permanent Families Management Team (Managing Director, Head of Service and Branch Manager, East Midlands) meet bi-monthly to review overarching strategic needs and plan in the light of management data, the national context and Coram's own operational plans.
- The Management Team meets with Coram's Senior Management Team twice yearly to review the work of the service twice in preparation for the annual review and in order to draw up forward plans.
- The Senior Management Team reviews the forward plans and budget before these are submitted to the Children's Services Committee and Trustees.

6. Procedures for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving, supporting and ongoing training for adopters

All enquiries are dealt with promptly and helpfully – whether by telephone, letter or e-mail in line with time scales within the Two Stage Adopter Assessment Process. Enquiries are dealt with on the same day if at all possible. A detailed information pack is sent to enquirers who meet the eligibility enquiry which includes a copy of the Coram complaints procedure. Enquirers from outside our area are referred to First 4 Adoption. A general information pack is sent to those who do not meet the criteria but are interested in knowing more about adoption.

Coram's criteria are inclusive. There are no 'blanket bans' but we do seek adopters and permanent carers who have the capacity to provide a permanent home for children who have complex backgrounds.

Within 10 days enquirers who meet the eligibility criteria for prospective adopters and who wish to proceed with their interest in adopting through Coram in London are invited to an initial interview with a Social Worker. Some enquirers choose to attend an Information Meeting before attending for an initial interview. At the initial interview enquirers will be given information about the adoption assessment process, including timescales and the range of children likely to be placed. At the initial interview the enquirer will be offered the Registration of Interest Form (ROI). The enquirer will be told who to contact if they need any help in completing the form.

Once the enquirer returns the ROI the Branch Manager will let the enquirer know within 5 working days whether Coram is able to accept this. If the ROI is declined the enquirer will be informed of the reasons in writing.

If the ROI is accepted the prospective adopters will be sent information about Stage One of the assessment process including: Preparation and Training Information, the Stage One Agreement Form, information about Statutory Checks and the Stage One Pack. The prospective adopters will also be given the name of their allocated social worker for Stage One.

Preparation and Training

Prospective adopters are offered preparation and training in Stages 1 and 2. The training is designed to help them assess their own capacity and motivation to adopt a child by providing information, stimulating discussion and also through meeting experienced adopters. Prospective adopters are encouraged to attend two days of training during Stage 1 and a further day in Stage 2. Stage 1 training is held monthly. They are also encouraged to access the e-learning material on the First4Adoption website.

Concurrent Planning

Prospective adopters who are applying to be concurrent planning carers will receive two additional full day training sessions on concurrent planning. This training is designed to help people assess their own capacity and motivation to care for a child placed with concurrent planning carers and includes meeting with experienced concurrent carers. Because of this element of self-selection, there is an opportunity for enquirers to decide whether or not to proceed. Applicants are expected to complete evaluations on each of the groups.

None of the preparation is formally assessed. However if the group leaders have particular concerns these will be shared with the individual after the groups, and then with the assessing social worker. The group leaders write a brief descriptive comment on the applicant's participation in the groups for inclusion in the Prospective Adopter's/Foster Carer's Report.

Statutory Checks

All statutory checks, including DBS checks and medicals are taken up as soon as the ROI is received. Applicants are aware that negative police/statutory checks may affect their application and in some case may result in rejection. References are taken up with Local Authorities where the applicants have lived over the past 10 years. Applicants are advised to inform us of any adverse history or medical condition which any of these checks may reveal. If applicants work with children or vulnerable adults, employers are asked whether there are any concerns of a safeguarding nature. This includes voluntary work.

Most other checks including employer's checks, contacting adult children of the applicant/s and former partners with whom the applicant has jointly parented a child will be done in Stage 2.

Medical Advisor

Applicants will be asked to have their adoption medical as soon as their ROI is received. The Medical Advisor may follow up any concerns with the GP/hospital consultant. The Medical Advisor's opinion is taken into account in assessing the applicants' suitability to progress to Stage 2 alongside other information.

Stage 1

Every effort is made to complete the work of Stage 1 within two months, unless there are clear reasons why it needs to take longer, for example when a criminal record check is delayed, or if a prospective adopter wants more time.

The allocated social worker will meet with the prospective adopters on at least one occasion during Stage 1. The aim of this meeting will be to clarify the preparation and training that will be required during Stage 1 and to offer appropriate support. This will normally be a home visit.

If a decision is made by the agency during Stage 1 that the prospective adopter is not suitable a written explanation of this decision will be provided and the adopters will be informed about the complaints process.

Stage 2

Stage 2 begins once the statutory checks are returned and the prospective adopters have confirmed that they wish to proceed. A Stage 2 application form is completed by the applicants, and an agreement is drawn up which details the work to be undertaken and the timetable for meetings etc. Visits to referees will be undertaken in Stage 2. The work in Stage 2 will be completed by one social worker. If there are particular concerns a second opinion interview will be arranged. All assessments are regularly discussed in supervision.

Applicants are given to understand that we see the whole assessment process as a shared responsibility between themselves and Coram and that we will raise any concerns with them.

During Stage 2 if issues arise which the assessing social worker and his/her manager believe might mean that an applicant would not be approved by Panel we may present a 'brief report' to Panel. Applicants may make representations in person or writing to Panel. If Panel recommends that the application should not be completed, and the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) is subsequently 'minded' to decide that the assessment should not be completed, the ADM will issue a 'qualifying determination', and inform the applicants of their options. The applicants are entitled to ask for their application to be reconsidered by the Coram Panel, or to go the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). The recommendation of the subsequent Coram Panel or of the IRM is then referred back to the ADM, who will consider all the information and reach a decision which will be final.

Stage 2 will usually take 4 months unless there are reasonable grounds to extend the assessment, or the prospective adopter requests an extension to the process. The proposed date for submitting the application to Panel will be set during the Stage 2 agreement meeting. If there are delays in completing the assessment the reason for this will be explained in the report for Panel. Applicants see their Prospective Adopters Report (PAR) and may contribute to it/correct it or attach their own written comments. They will usually have up to 5 working days for this work. Applicants may attend panel if they wish and address any issues personally. However Panel's recommendation is made on the basis of the social work assessment and the information in the PAR, not on the impression made by applicants at panel.

In the course of the assessment, the topics listed in the PAR are covered, and each applicant is offered at least one individual interview. At least one visit is paid to the applicant/s' home. Any children of the applicant/s will be involved in the assessment and their views obtained in an age appropriate manner.

Interviewing Members of Extended Family/Adult Children

If members of the extended family are expected to play a significant role in an adopted child's life (e.g. by providing day care for a working parent) they should be interviewed. Family members or friends who may regularly provide back-up care should be police checked.

Where possible adult children of the applicant(s), including those who live away from home, are interviewed. They can provide useful information on parenting skills and insight into the applicant's ability to keep children safe and to protect them from abuse. Involving them appropriately in the process can ensure greater understanding by them of their new sibling and that their parents may need support. Where an interview is not possible, adult children receive a letter seeking their comments on their parent's plans. The comments of adult children are taken seriously. They do not have an automatic veto but their views are considered and followed up. If we can obtain their permission their comments are shared with the applicants.

Former Partners

Where applicants have jointly parented a child with a former partner, that partner will generally be contacted to request their view on any concerns they may have about the applicant's ability to keep a child safe. If this is not possible/ appropriate (eg because of possible violence from an ex-partner towards an applicant), the reason needs to be explained in the assessment report and the panel will need to take a view of all the circumstances. Former partners do not have a veto, and anything they say needs to be considered in context.

Referees

At least three personal referees need to be interviewed and to complete a written reference. One of these should be a family member who may be different from the family member referred to above. In the case of applicants who are couples, it is Coram's policy to interview a representative from each side of the family. Additional referees may be needed if there are issues about a particular stage in the applicant's life about which we need to obtain another view. A written summary of each interview is made. Interviews with referees are confidential and referees should be assured that Coram will treat them as such. However when adoption applications are made to the courts, the court may reveal information which may include references. Referees are asked to sign the summary of the interview which goes to Panel. Referee questionnaires are sent out during Stage 1 and verification from referees that they do not have concerns about the applicants' approval is also obtained by a phone discussion. Face to face interviews with referees usually take place during Stage 2.

Panel

When the Panel has considered the application, Panel makes a recommendation whether or not the applicant/s should be approved as adopters/ foster carers. The recommendation is

considered by the Decision Maker, who makes the decision. If the applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome s/he may make representations via the Independent Review Mechanism. The procedure for applications that go to the IRM is described above.

Review of Adopters/ Foster Carers

Two types of reviews are carried out:

- a) ***Prospective adopters***: Where there is a significant change of circumstance, or if approved adopters have not had a child placed within a year since being approved (and similarly if they wait for a further period of a year without a placement) they will be reviewed by the relevant manager.

- b) ***Foster carers*** are reviewed every year. The first review of a foster carer is presented to the Panel.

If as a result of the review there is a recommendation for deregistration of either a foster carer or a prospective adopter, or to alter the terms of approval of the foster carer, the social worker will write a report for Panel, detailing

- (i) Linkings/ Placements that have been considered and why no placement resulted.
- (ii) Significant changes in circumstances.
- (iii) Changes in the kind of child sought.
- (iv) The applicant's views and wishes
- (v) Information from updated statutory checks – DBS and other checks need to be updated every two years for prospective adopters, and every three years for foster carers.
- (vi) Recommendation as to whether to continue the approved status of the applicant/s or not.

As with the original approval, prospective adopters/ foster carers have the right to see the report, comment on it and to attend Panel. The representations procedure or referral to the Independent Review Mechanism is available at this stage as at the initial approval stage.

Second Time Applicants

Second time applicants may be eligible for a fast track process. Their assessments will build on their experience and concentrate on issues that the previous placement has raised as well as considering the needs of their existing child/ren and their needs in relation to a new placement.

Supporting Placements

- a) Social work visits to foster/adoptive families should be appropriate to the needs of each placement. As a minimum, all foster/adoptive families should be visited within a week of the child being placed, thereafter weekly till the first review, two/three weekly to the second review, two/four weekly till third review. After this visits should be no less than six/eight weekly. Support visits may be shared between Coram and the placing Local Authority. Coram is not responsible for statutory visits to children – these are the responsibility of the placing Local Authority.

- b) Carers/adopters will have the office phone numbers of their Coram social worker, and their manager. Carers/adopters will also be given the out of hour's number phone number of the local authority who is the care authority for the child placed with them. In addition they will be given a contact number for their social worker and/or his/her manager to use out of hours although there is no expectation that there would always be someone from Coram available out of hours.

- c) Coram provides various support services including:
- Study days/evening seminars
 - Monthly Stay and Play sessions for adopters and pre-school children – with support from a child psychotherapist
 - Annual picnic / social events
 - Newsletter
 - Consultation and advice on behavioural problems/emotional difficulties
 - Consultation and advice on talking to children about their history (Life Storybook Work)
 - Liaison with and referral to specialist services such as Community Mental Health Services or local educational support.
 - Parenting Skills training
 - Adolescent Parenting Skills training.
 - Support in arranging contact
 - Letterbox system
 - Books / dvd library

In addition Coram has a service level agreement with the Tavistock Clinic, a Tier 4 specialist Adoption and Fostering Service and can refer families for an assessment.

Ongoing Training

- a) A programme of study days is offered to adopters and carers. These usually take place on Saturdays, and combine a support function with training on a topic such as life story books and talking about children's history or contact issues, including the internet.
- b) The Concurrent Planning Project offers support groups for carers which include training on topics from the national minimum standards relating to meeting children's health, educational and leisure needs, managing contact, working in partnership with the Local Authority etc.
- c) The Concurrent Planning Project runs support groups for relatives and support carers of concurrent planning foster carers.

7. Summary of Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 : Informal Complaints

In the first instance these should be referred to the relevant Branch Manager or Head of Service. Informal complaints will be dealt within 10 days, when the Complainant should also be informed of his/her right to make a formal complaint if s/he is not satisfied.

Stage 2 : Formal Complaints

When a formal complaint is received, a member of Coram's Senior Management Team will be appointed to coordinate this. S/he will complete an investigation within 20 days and inform the Complainant of the outcome and of any action to be taken. Complainants should be told about their right of appeal.

Stage 3 : Appeal Stage

This will be dealt with by the Chief Executive Officer, who will appoint a Coram trustee to undertake the investigation. The investigation will be completed within 35 days. The Complainant will receive a response as to the outcome of the investigation and what action is to be taken, together with information about Ofsted if s/he remains dissatisfied.

Complainants will be given any necessary help to register their complaint.

The member of staff concerned will report back to the Chief Executive within 10 days as to how the recommendations have been implemented.

Note: Complaints may be made by someone acting on behalf of a child, or by any user of the Service.

The Complaints Procedure is included in the staff handbook and is given to all prospective adopters and carers as well as to other users. It includes the address of the Ofsted office which inspects the service.

The Children's Guide tells children about who to contact if they are unhappy about a service from Coram. It includes contact details for Coram managers, independent children's advocacy services for children and the Children's Commissioner for England.

Manager of Adoption Support Service

Heather Atkinson

Adoption and Permanent Families Service

Coram

41 Brunswick Square

London

WC1N 1AZ

Tel: 020 7520 3418

Email: heather.atkinson@coram.org.uk

Manager of Coram South London

Wendy Wall

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Clapham Junction

London

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Tel 020 7326 6655

Email: Wendy.wall@coram.org.uk

Manager of Coram/Harrow Partnership and City of London

Hellan Timothy-James

Coram

41 Brunswick Square

London

WC1N 1AZ

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Email: hellan@coram.org.uk

Harrow Council Children's Services

Harrow Council West Wing

Civic Centre 1,

Station Road

Harrow,

Middlesex

HA1 2UW

Tel: 020 8736 6449

Email: hellan.timothy-james@harrow.gov.uk

Manager of Coram/Redbridge Partnership

Teresa Stratford

London Borough of Redbridge

Station Road Centre

Barkingside

Essex

IG6 1NB

Tel: 020 8708 7532

Email: Teresa.stratford@Redbridge.gov.uk

Manager of Coram/Thurrock Partnership

Marcia Brown

Thurrock Council

Civic Offices

New Road

Grays

Essex

RM17 6SL

Tel: 01375 652 656

Email: Marcia.Brown@Thurrock.gov.uk

Annexure B

Qualifications of the Managers and Staff

i) Henriette Jeanne Kaniuk

Qualifications:

BA Hons English Literature, University of the Witwatersrand, 1966

BA (Hons) Social Work, University of the Witwatersrand, 1971

Career:

1972-1980 Social Worker/Senior Practitioner Camden Social Services Dept

1980-Present Head of Coram Adoption & Permanent Family Service

Registered as a social worker with the Health and Care Professions Council

ii) Alice Kathleen Noon

Qualifications:

BA Hons English Literature, University of Nottingham, 1981

Certificate of Qualification in Social Work Croydon College, 1990

Certificate of Management Studies Lewisham College, 1999

Graduate Diploma in work with Children and Families including Enabling the Professional Development of Others Royal Holloway/University of London, 2009

Career:

1990-1992 Social Worker, Bexley CAMHS Team

1995-1999 Social Worker, Bexley Adoption and Fostering Team

1995-1999 Social Worker, Lewisham Adoption Team.

1999-2000 Development Officer, BAAF

2000-2002 Independent Social Worker

2002-2009 Senior Practitioner and then Acting Team Manager, Childlink Adoption Society; also continuing some work for Lewisham Adoption and Permanent Families Service

2009-present Manager London Adoption Team/Deputy Head of Coram Adoption and Permanent Families Service

Registered as a social worker with the Health and Care Professions Council

iii) Wendy Elisabeth Wall

Qualifications:

BSc (Hons) Psychology, Middlesex Polytechnic, 1991

MSc in Social Policy and Social Work Studies, London School of Economics, 1996

Diploma in Social Work, London School of Economics, 1996

Post Qualifying Award in Child Care (PQ2), 2005

Institute of Leadership and Management Level 5 Award, 2009

Career:

1996-1999 Social Worker in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

1999-2005 Adoption Social Worker then Senior Practitioner in Coram Adoption and Permanent Families Service

2005-2008 Senior Practitioner in London Borough of Camden Adoption and Permanence Team; also some sessional work for Coram Adoption and Permanent Families Service and for the Institute of Psychiatry.

2008-Present Deputy Manager London Adoption Team in Coram Adoption and Permanent Families Service

Registered as a social worker with the Health and Care Professions Council

iv) Margaret Davies

Qualifications:

BA Applied Social Studies Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham, 1985

CQSW Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham, 1985
MA Comparative Sociology and Social Policy North London Polytechnic, 1991

Career:

1985–1988 Social Worker, Maternity and Neo Natal Wards, Edgware General Hospital
Barnet Social Services Department
1988–1993 Social Worker, Adoption Team, Kensington & Chelsea Social Services Dept
1993–1995 Senior Lecturer, Access to Social Work Hackney Community College
1995–1997 Lecturer Kensington & Chelsea College; West London College; Westminster
Adult Education Service
1997–1998 Social worker, Teenage Fostering Team, Hounslow Social Services Dept
1998–2009 Senior Social Worker, Adoption Support Team, Ealing Social Services Dept
2009–2014 Principal Social Worker, Adoption Team, Hammersmith & Fulham Social
Services Dept
May 2014–present Adoption Manager, Coram
Registered as a social worker with the Health and Care Professions Council

v) **Heather Atkinson**

Qualifications:

Leicester University Psychology, Sociology and English, 1984
Social work training, 1984–1986

Career:

Registered as a social worker with the General Social Care Council

vi) **Gillian Kirsch**

Qualifications:

BA Hons Sociology and Social Administration Warwick University, 1981
CQSW and Applied Social Studies, Surrey University, 1985
Practice Teaching Award, Middlesex University
Post graduate Diploma in Advanced Social work, University of East London and Tavistock
and Portman NHS Trust, 2001
MA in Advanced Social Work, University of East London and Tavistock and Portman NHS
Trust, 2004
Institute of Leadership and Management Level 5 Award, 2006

Career:

1981–1984 Education welfare Officer – ILEA
1985, Social worker Redbridge Social Services
Career break
1994–1995 Social worker, Barnet Social Services under 8's Service
1995–Social worker, Hertfordshire Social services, Child Protection
1995–1999 Social worker Children and families, Norwood
2000–2001 Senior Social worker Children and families, Norwood
2001–2006 Social work Manager Children and families, Norwood
2006–2010 Manager Fostering and Domestic Adoption, Norwood
2010–Present Manager Adoption Services
Registered as a social worker with the Health and Care Professions Council

vii) **Hellan Ann-Marie Timothy James**

Qualifications:

BSc Hons Applied social Studies/CQSW. University of North London 1992
Post Qualifying Child Care Award (PQ2), 2005
Institute of Leadership and Management Award, 2009

Career:

1993–2007 Social Worker then Senior Practitioner, Coram Adoption Service
2007–2008, Senior Practitioner, Coram/ Harrow Adoption Partnership

2008–Present, Manager, Coram/ Harrow Adoption Partnership
Registered as a social worker with the Health and Care Professions Council

viii) Teresa Jane Stratford

Qualifications:

BSW, Massey University New Zealand, 1992
Practice Teaching award Royal Holloway, 2000
Masters' Degree in Strategic Leadership and Management (Tavistock), 2013-present

Career:

1992-1994 Social Worker in New Zealand Children and Families Social Work
1995-2002, IRO, London Borough of Barnet Children and Families Social Work Dept
2003-2004 Adoption Social Worker, London Borough of Enfield
2004-2006 Barnardo's Children's Rights
2006-2007 Children and Families Social Worker in London Borough of Lambeth
2007-2016 Team Manager and Adoption Team Manager in Fostering, London Borough of Haringey
2016-present, Manager, Coram/Redbridge Adoption Partnership
Registered as a social worker with the Health and Care Professions Council

ix) Marcia Brown

Qualifications:

CQSW & BA Applied Social Studies, Trent University, 1991
Diploma in Management Studies, Croydon College, 2006

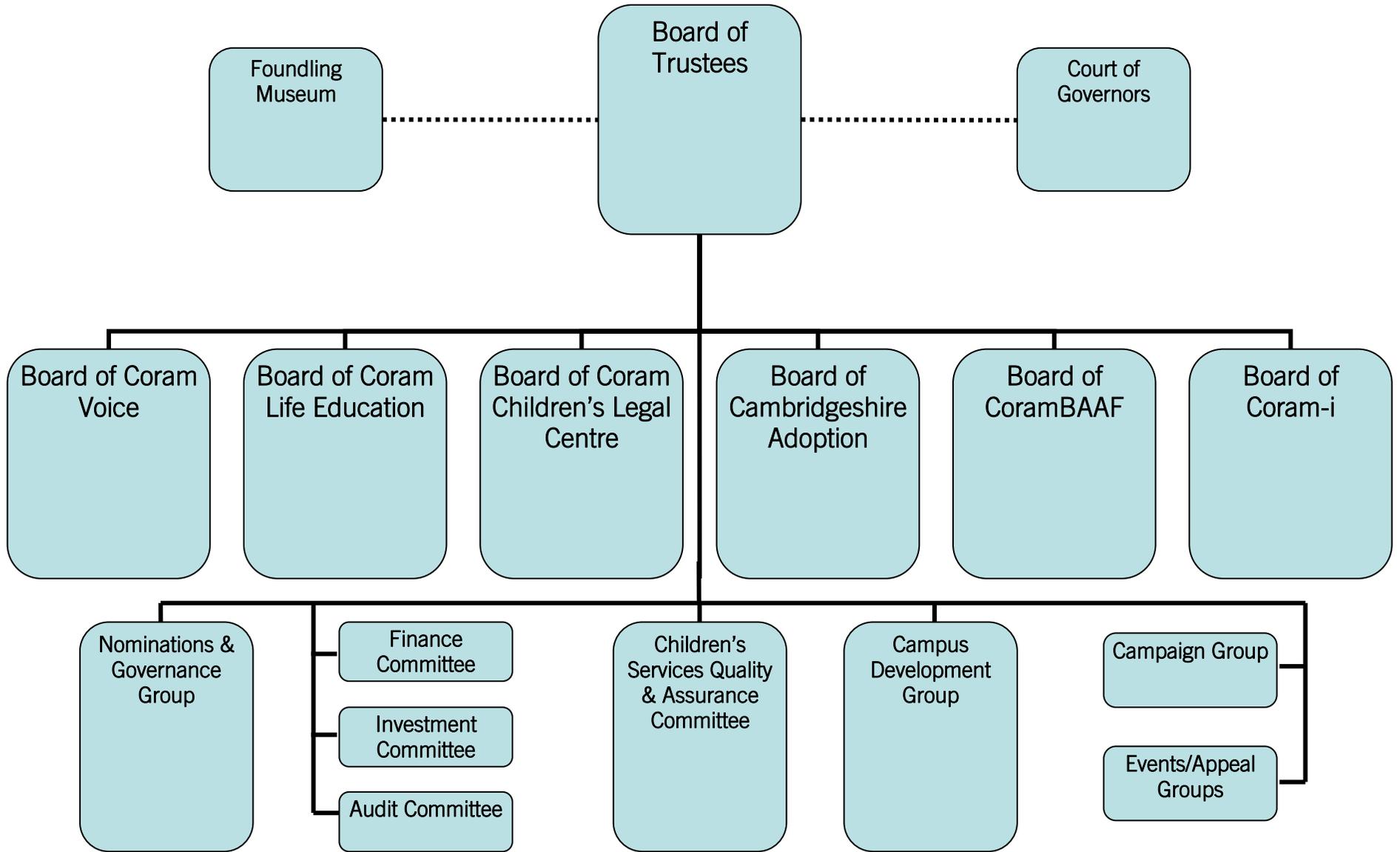
Career:

1993- Residential Social Worker, Vassell House Children's Home
1993-1999 Senior Social Worker, The Independent Adoption Service
1999-2001 Social Worker, London Borough of Lambeth
2001-2003 Freelance Social Worker, Various London Local Authorities
2003-2004 Senior Social Worker, Foster Care Associates
2004-2009 Team Manager, Catholic Children's Society, Families for All
2010- Locum Team Manager, Post Adoption, London Borough of Haringey
2010-2012 Group Manager, Adoption, London Borough of Bromley
2012-2013 Service Manager, Adoption & Fostering, Cabrini Children's Society
2013-2014 Panel Advisor, Adoption & Fostering, Central Bedfordshire
2014-2015 Adoption & Permanence Team Manager, London Borough of Merton
2015 Adoption & Permanence Team Manager, London Borough of Wandsworth
2016-present, Manager, Coram/Thurrock Adoption Partnership
Registered as a social worker with the Health and Care Professions Council

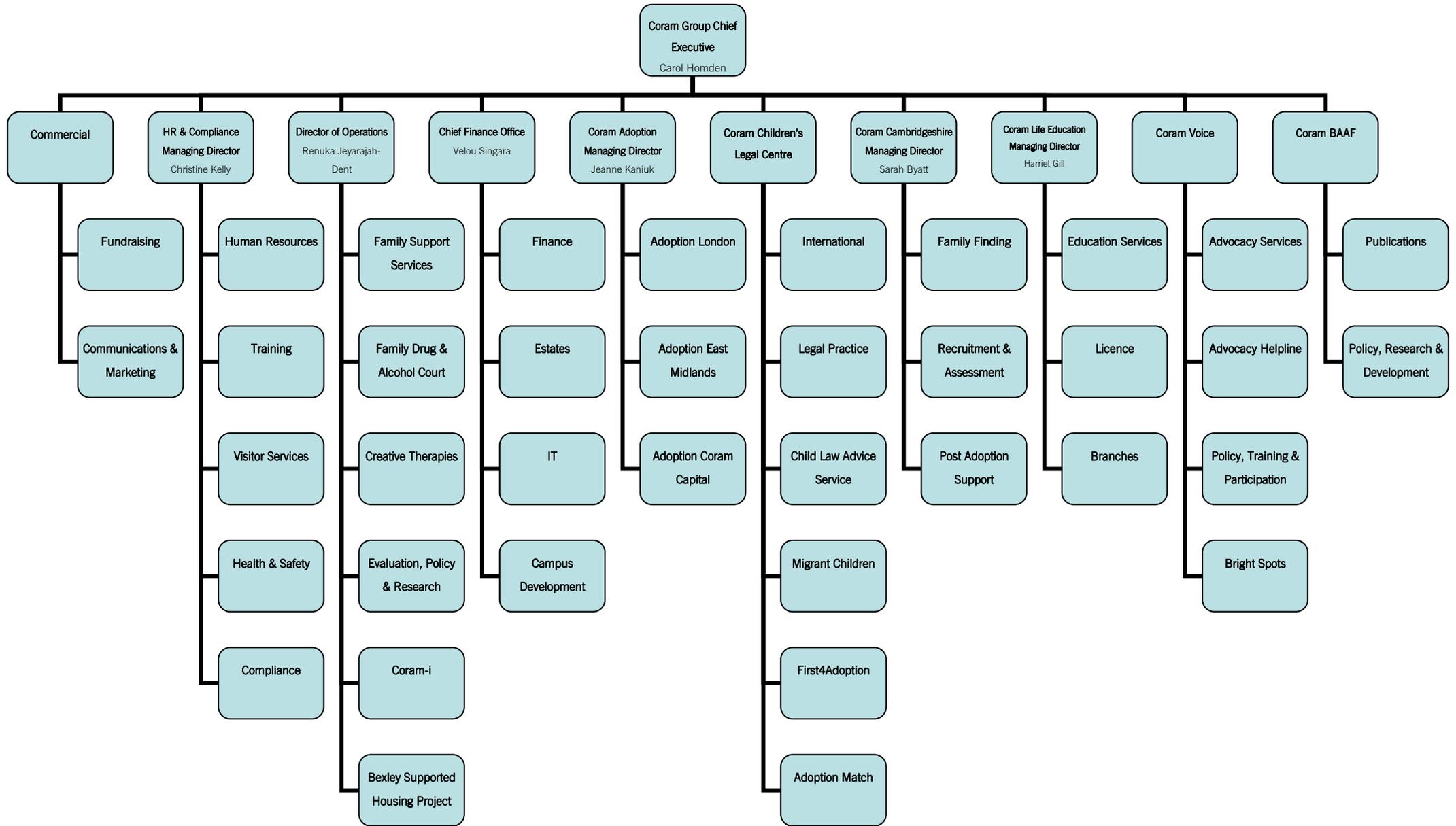
Qualifications and Experience of Staff

All the professional staff have CQSW's, DipSW or equivalent qualifications and all are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council. There is a Head of Service, and four managers in the London Adoption Team, including the manager of the Adoption Support team and manager of the South London team. There are 17 senior practitioners including 4 adoption support workers and two concurrent planning workers. There is also a contact worker/ family support worker. Of these, nine hold the PQ1 and six have obtained the full Child Care Award. In addition, many of the social workers hold higher specialist awards, and including practice teaching, systemic therapy, theraplay and counselling. Six members of the team are trained to deliver parenting skills courses for adopters (based on the Webster Stratton programme), and three are trained to administer story stem assessments. Two social workers are currently training to provide VIPP (Video feedback intervention to promote positive parenting). The majority of the staff team have qualifications beyond the basic social work training, and also many years of adoption experience. The social work staff group have between 10 and 32 years of experience as qualified social workers.

Annexure C: Governance Chart - 2016



Annexure D: Organisational Chart



Annexure D: Coram Capital Adoption Service Management Structures - 2016

