

## Adoption & Permanent Families Service – London

### Statement of Purpose for Adoption and Foster Care



Adoption & Permanent Families Service – London May 2017  
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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 is both a registered Adoption Agency and a Fostering Service and this Statement of Purpose addresses the importance of achieving permanence for children which is relevant to both adoption and foster care. 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 as contracted on behalf of some local authorities and providing concurrent planning and foster for 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; This includes running a National membership scheme (The Early Permanence Network) for LAs, RAAs and VAAs who wish to provide best practice in early permanence planning
- To work collaboratively with emerging Regional Adoption Agencies including the London RAA to promote best practice within early permanence planning
- 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. In interagency placements support to birth relatives of adopted children is the Local Authority's responsibility;
- Coram actively supports early permanence planning for children and works with Local Authorities to identify children who would benefit from foster for adoption (FFA) placements.
- Coram's Early Permanence Programme 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 we believe will be able to meet the needs to the children who need permanent placement through adoption, including those from a range of ethnic, religious backgrounds, those with disabilities and those of all sexual orientations. We balance the child's holistic needs and timescale in selecting a placement.
- 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 (e.g. 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 prioritise children's safety and welfare and implement Coram's Safeguarding Children Policy and consult with the Safeguarding Lead in relation to any concerns.

## 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

and with the City of London. We also maintain links with Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption to share and promote good practice.

- a. ***Coram Capital Adoption*** – an adoption placement and support team serving adopters who live approximately 35 – 40 miles from London or those who live in our Partnership Local Authorities. The London team includes a sub-office in South London. Coram Capital welcomes applicants from all sections of the community in keeping with Coram’s inclusive ethos. Coram Capital 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 concurrent planning carers and foster for adoption carers 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 or residential care.
- c. ***Early Permanence (Concurrent Planning and Foster for Adoption)*** – Coram is committed to achieving early placement for children and does this through a focus on both Foster for Adoption (FFA) and Concurrent Planning (CP). Coram Capital offers a specialist concurrent planning 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. Until a Placement Order is made, there is a possibility that the child will return to the care of its parents/wider family. 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. We offer specialist training to adopters who believe they may be able to manage the risk of a FFA placement. From 2017 we will offer all prospective adopters a foundation training in Foster for Adoption at the start of their assessment so that they are able to consider this as a placement option.

Coram’s concurrent planning programme is embedded within the London Branch. Please see the Fostering Statement of Purpose for more information about Concurrent Planning.

- During care proceedings the dually approved carers are the children’s foster carers. They bring the children for contact regularly and are involved in hand overs

with the children's birth parents at the beginning and end of contact, 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, Coram 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.

**Early Permanence Network:** Coram offers a subscription scheme to Local Authorities and VAAs who want to develop concurrent planning /Foster for Adoption 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. In 2016/17 over 120 babies were placed in concurrent planning or foster 4 adoption placements by subscribing LAs and VAAs.

**National Centre for Early Permanence:** Coram has been designated the National Centre for Early Permanence.

**d. Adoption Support Services** - Coram offers a comprehensive range of services to support to families and children placed via Coram which continues post-order. This programme includes:

- Parenting skills programmes for adopters which are offered to adoptive parents 6-18 months after placement as well as parenting skills groups for adopters whose children are approaching /already in adolescence.
- A Stay and Play group which meets monthly as a peer support group. This group is attended by experienced adoption support professionals and also a child psychotherapist who is available for informal consultation.
- Regular workshops for adopters on life storybooks and talking to children about their background.
- Creative therapy (i.e. music and art therapy) for adopted children.
- MBT (mentalisation) for adoptive families, an intervention developed by the Anna Freud Centre in collaboration with Coram based on application of attachment theory, and adapted for the needs of adopted children and their parents. Initial evaluation of this programme is very positive.
- Coram also offers assistance with contact, advocacy and referral to other agencies for specialist support.

Coram's Adoption Support Services may be commissioned by Local Authorities and are eligible for funding by the Adoption Support Fund.

**Participation:** 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 participation programme which aims to give adopted adolescents 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. <http://www.coram.org.uk/supporting-young-people/adoptables>

These young people are also available to speak at preparation groups for adopters from time to time.

- e. **Adoption Support Gateway** - In October last year Coram launched the Adoption Support Gateway (ASG) in partnership with Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, National Adoption & Fostering Service at South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, and Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. These services are available to adopters and their children referred by Local Authorities across London.

**Alongside direct referral to a range of specialist CAMHS services the ASG provides in-house psychological interventions including:**

- Art Therapy and Music Therapy
- Mentalisation-Based Therapy (MBT)
- Clinical Psychology-led child and family psychological interventions
- Systemic family therapy
- Bespoke Parenting Skills Programmes (e.g. Incredible Years)
- Mindfulness for Parents & Families course

f. ***Coram's Partnerships with Local Authorities: Coram Capital Adoption***

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. Coram Capital may become a Regional Adoption Agency as proposed under current government legislation. In this model Coram provides a single pool of adopters and dually approved carers for the pool of children who need adoption within the participating Local Authorities. Coram assumes 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.

- g. ***National Centre for Early Permanence:*** Coram has been designated the National Centre for Early Permanence

#### 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 reflective 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 records 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 and the East Midlands Branch Manager receive supervision from the Head of Service in London.
- The Head of Service and the Coram Capital Partnership Managers receive supervision from the Managing Director of Adoption.
- The therapists in the Adoption Support Gateway receive clinical supervision from the ASG Clinical Lead, who is supervised by the overall Clinical Lead of Coram's therapeutic services.
- 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.
- Safeguarding concerns arising from work undertaken by therapists in the ASG are discussed with the Clinical Lead and recorded. Monitoring reports are submitted to Coram's Head of Safeguarding
- All safeguarding concerns are reported to the appropriate statutory authority promptly.
- There is a quarterly return of safeguarding referrals and file audits 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 stage 2 of the assessment if problematic issues arise and the agency is considering terminating the assessment.
- 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.
- Panel training is offered regularly.
- Panel members reflect a range of personal and professional background experience including adopters, adoption managers and social workers, foster care managers, and magistrates.

### 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.
- Feedback is sought from adopters who make use of Coram's support services.
- 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 early permanence process, with an opportunity for them to provide suggestions regarding improvements. These reports are taken to managers for discussion, and suggestions are implemented if appropriate.
- 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 adopters serve 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.
  - A Stay and Play group for pre-school children with the support of the Adoption Support Manager, Family Support worker and a Child Psychotherapist are held monthly. These groups provide opportunities for peer support and participation.
  - 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.
- Senior Adoption Managers meet with Coram's Senior Management Team as required to review the work in the light of trends and outcomes and to plan future direction and set the budget.
- 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 available on the Coram website and can be downloaded by enquirers or enquirers can contact the London Adoption Service by telephone or email and the information pack will be sent out to them. The pack includes information about adoption including the the eligibility enquiry and 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 and we 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 will also have the opportunity to attend Early Permanence training. They are also strongly encouraged to access the e-learning material on the First4Adoption website.

### **Early Permanence Placements: Concurrent Planning and Foster for Adoption**

Prospective adopters who are applying to be concurrent planning carers or Foster for Adoption carers will receive two additional full day training sessions. This training is designed to help people assess their own capacity and motivation to care for a child placed as foster child during care proceedings 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 programme is formally assessed. However if the group leaders have 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. Referees views will be sought again when adopters are preparing to submit their adoption application to court.

### 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 Agency 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.
  - Books / dvd library

Families can also be referred to Coram's Adoption Support Gateway (see above).

### **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) There are support groups for Concurrent Planning carers which include training on topics from the national minimum standards for foster carers and the Training Support and Development standards for foster carers.
- c) There is training and information offered to the 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.

## **Annexure A: Details of the Registration Authority**

The Registration Authority is Ofsted whose address is:

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Telephone No. 0300 123 1231

Fax: 0300 123 3159

E mail: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

Web: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Registered Provider is **Coram**, which is a children's charity established by Royal Charter and Act of Parliament in 1739. The Adoption and Permanent Families Service is one of the main child care services which are run by the charity. The charity's address is:

Coram  
41 Brunswick Square  
London  
WC1N 1AZ

**Responsible Individual – Managing Director – London Adoption & Permanent Families:**

Mrs Henriette Jeanne Kaniuk

Coram  
41 Brunswick Square  
London  
WC1N 1AZ  
Tel: 020 7520 0350

Email: [jeanne@coram.org.uk](mailto:jeanne@coram.org.uk)

**Head of Service – London Adoption Branch/Fostering Service**

Ms Alice Kathleen Noon

Coram  
41 Brunswick Square  
London  
WC1N 1AZ  
Tel: 020 7520 0349

Email: [alice@coram.org.uk](mailto:alice@coram.org.uk)

**Managers - London Adoption Team**

**Margaret Davies**

**Gillian Kirsch**

Adoption and Permanent Families Service

Coram  
41 Brunswick Square  
London  
WC1N 1AZ  
Tel: 020 7520 3418  
Tel: 020 7520 2027

Email: [Maggie.davies@coram.org.uk](mailto:Maggie.davies@coram.org.uk)

Email: [Gillian.kirsch@coram.org.uk](mailto:Gillian.kirsch@coram.org.uk)

**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](mailto:heather.atkinson@coram.org.uk)

**Manager of Coram South London**

**Wendy Wall**

Lower Floor  
S189 Lavender Hill  
Clapham Junction  
London  
SW11 5TB  
Tel 020 7326 6655

Email: [Wendy.wall@coram.org.uk](mailto:Wendy.wall@coram.org.uk)

**Manager of Coram/Harrow Partnership and City of London**

**Hellan Timothy-James**

Coram

41 Brunswick Square  
London  
WC1N 1AZ  
Tel: 020 7520 0356

Email: [hellan@coram.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:Teresa.stratford@Redbridge.gov.uk)

**Manager of Coram/Thurrock Partnership**

**Tony Quinn**

Thurrock Council  
Civic Offices  
New Road  
Grays  
Essex  
RM17 6SL  
Tel: 01375 652 656

Email: [TQuinn@Thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:TQuinn@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, South London Adoption Team Manager, Coram

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) **Tony Quinn**

**Qualifications:**

MSc (Oxon) / CQSW awarded 02/07/93 Oxford University  
BSc Hons 2i Social Policy City of London Polytechnic 1990

**Career:**

1993, Camden Social Services Locum Social Worker, Looked After Children Team  
1994, Breslaf Centre Poland Voluntary Aid Worker  
1994-1995, Islington Council Locum Social Worker, Generic / Children & families Team  
1995, Southwark Social services Children & Families Locum Social Worker  
1995 -1998, Bexley Council Social Worker, Fostering & Adoption Team  
1998-2002, TACT Social Worker, Fostering Team  
2002–2003, Kent County Council Supervising Social Worker  
2003–2005, Sutton Council Supervising Social worker  
2004–2005, Sutton, Kingston & Merton Council Social Worker, Sessional Emergency Duty Team  
2005-2007, Merton Council Locum Social Worker, Adoption Team and Placement Team, then Private Fostering Team, then Adoption Team  
2007-2008, 2009-2011, Freelance Social Work - Adoption assessments, Special Guardianship Assessment, Parenting  
2008-2009, Lambeth Council Locum Team Manager, Fostering Team  
2011, Caretech Foster Care Fostering Recruitment Manager  
2011-2013 Croydon Council Locum Team Leader, Fostering Team, then Operational Manager, Fostering Team, then Unit Manager, Fostering Team, then Delivery Manager, Fostering Team, then Unit Manager, Fostering Team.  
2014, Bexley Council Locum Team Manager, Adoption Team  
2014-2015, Achieving for Children (Richmond & Kingston Council's) Locum Team Manager, Adoption Team  
2015, Bexley Council Locum Team Manager, Fostering Team  
2015-2016, Sutton Council Locum Fostering Manager & SGO Team Manager  
July 2016 – Present, Coram Adoption Partnership Manager

x) **Amy Sara Davidow: Clinical Lead for Adoption Support Gateway**

**Qualifications:**

BA Psychology and Art history, University of Cape Town (South Africa), 2001; BA (Hons) Psychology, University of Stellenbosch (South Africa), 2002; MA Clinical Psychology, Rhodes University (South Africa), 2006; Mentalisation Based Therapy training, Anna Freud Centre, 2009; HCPC registration and UK equivalency as clinical psychologist 2010; Clinical Psychology Supervision Training UCL/UEL/ Royal Holloway, 2012.

**Career:**

11 years of experience as clinical psychologist and manager of therapy services in NHS, private and voluntary sector.

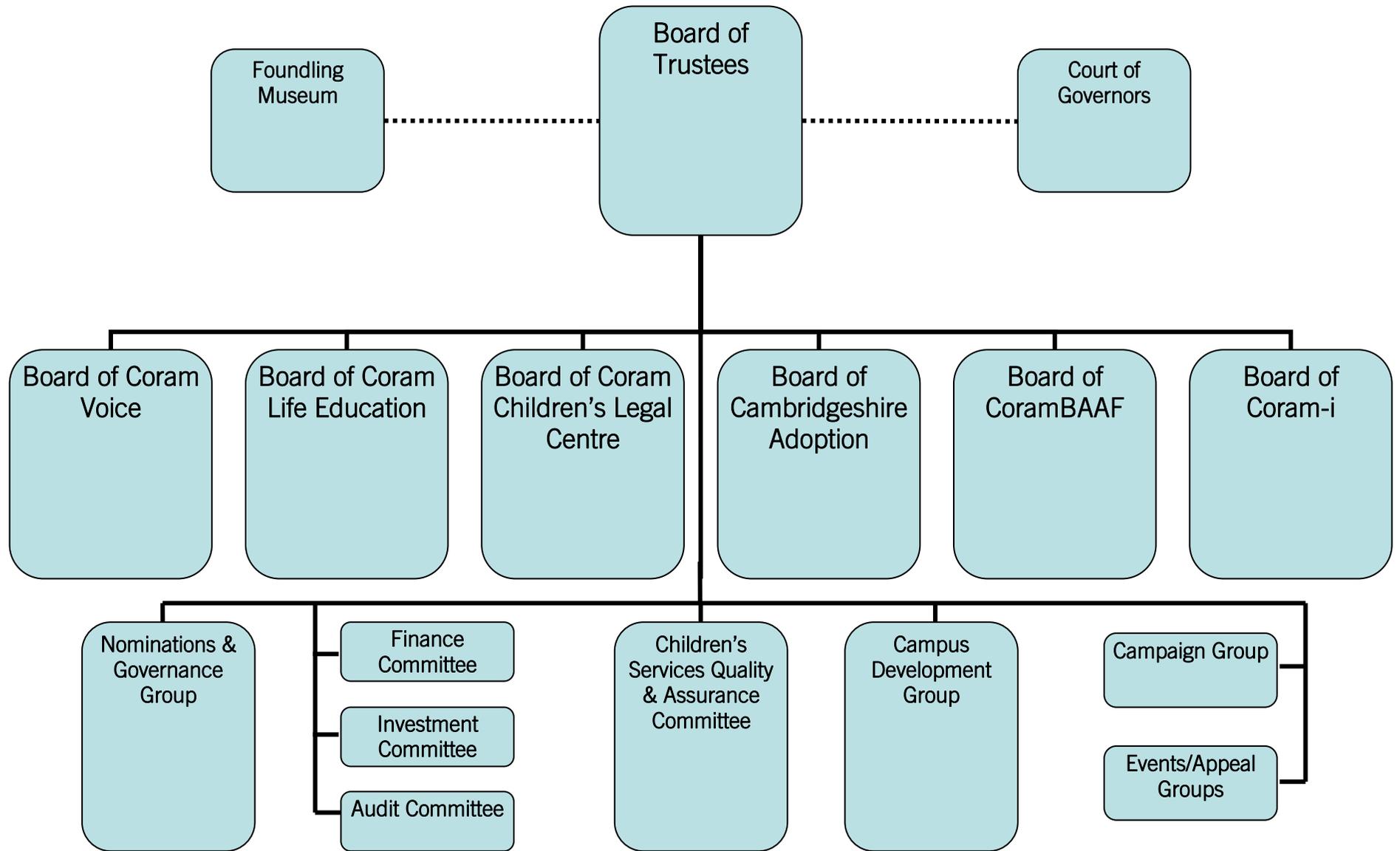
**Qualifications and Experience of Staff**

All the professional staff of the Adoption Service 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 a concurrent planning lead practitioner. There is also a contact worker/ family support worker. Of the social workers, nine hold the PQ1 and six have

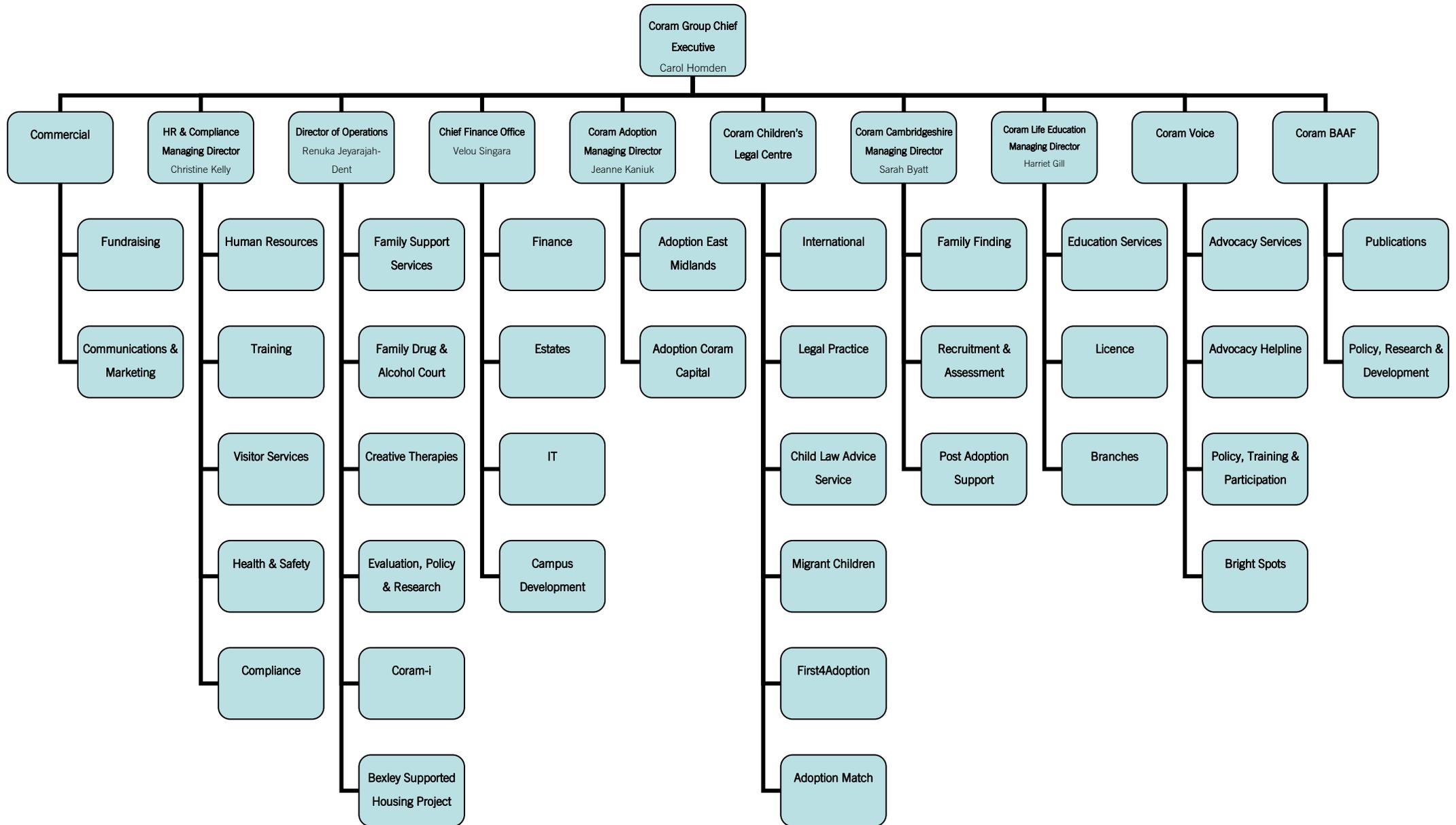
obtained the full Child Care Award. In addition, many of the social workers hold higher specialist awards, including practice teaching, systemic therapy, and counselling. Six members of the team are trained to deliver parenting skills courses for adopters (based on the Webster Stratton programme), Two social workers have recently been trained 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 6 and 32 years of experience as qualified social workers.

The Adoption Support Gateway employs a range of therapists including creative therapists, systemic family therapists, MBT therapists and clinical psychologists who all have appropriate professional training and membership of profession bodies, as well as an understanding of the impact of adoption and of early trauma and loss on adopted children and their families.

Annexure C: Governance Chart – 2017



## Annexure D: Organisational Chart 2017



Annexure E: Coram Capital Adoption Management Structure - 2017

