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|  | Chair: Alasdair Smith (AS Southwark DCS)  Attendees: Helen Edwards (HE advisor to the board & notes), Susanna Daus (SD Adopt London South), Jan Fishwick (JF CEO PACT), Debbie Gabriel (DG Adopt London West), Sue May (SM Adopt London East), Lydia Samuels (LS Adopt London North), Sue May (SM Ambitious for Adoption RAA) Brigitte Jordaan (BJ DCS Barnet), Carol Homden (CH CEO CoramBaaf), Klayre Rogers (KR We Are Family adopter rep) Lisa Barker (LB We Are Family adopter rep), Kelly McDonagh (KM Grandparents plus), Melinda Cassell (MC CAFCASS) Kate O’Brien (KO Grandparents Plus)  Apologies: Vicky West (BromleyHead of Service Adoption, Fostering, Connected Persons and Children with Disabilities), |  |
| **Item** | **Title** | **Action** |
| 1. | **Introductions**: Alasdair Smith  Melinda Cassell is going on maternity leave so her colleague Lake Gledhill will replace her on the board. | HE to amend membership list. |
| 2. | **Previous Minutes & Actions** **12/03/2020**  Outstanding actions: revise TOR to strengthen SGO element  SG data – action HE and Kevin Yong  **ASGLB update & Covid Act 2020 Amended regulations** – AS provided a brief update of the history of the board and its purpose to be helpful and give added value. The DfE expect each region to have a board. It was acknowledged that due to Covid 19 pandemic the board have not met since March and going forward the board will meet quarterly. Dates for 2021 at 9.30am – 11am are:  Tuesday 26th January, Tuesday 25th May, Tuesday 21st September.  JF raised how the board would consider the Black Lives Matter agenda. AS advised that this would be incorporated throughout discussions and explored how specific agenda items can be scheduled. |  |
| 3. | **a/ Adopter Voice** – update from RAA’s  Ambitious for Adoption – are not having partnership We are Family. Co-production has always been in place and working with WAF and the young person voice also included.  Adopt London – working with We Are Family. Support and developed strategic plan to reach more adopters and improve referral pathways. Promotion of WAF is growing. “WAF Talks” webinars programme has been great and well received as couldn’t attend events before. Planning more. WAF Easter survey for Covid 19 funds was positive and Adopt London are very grateful for this.  The voice is about hearing and transforming this into action. Challenge for reaching different communities to meet need.  CoramBAAF Adoptables is very effective. Body & Soul is facilitating adopted children’s voices.  Discussion about how we are hearing BME adopter voices and to bring to the meeting the outcome of BLM consultation. Agenda for next meeting.  WAF – concern about what is happening with ASF and if not available beyond March 2021 how will RAA’s cope with this. A decision might be made by December. Anecdotally it is working well and reaching adopters. DfE at pains to point adopters to make applications  Special Guardians Covid19 amendment to be considered and KD and Vas Patel to make a presentation of benefits of the adaptions made and benefits to SG families.  **b/ Regionalisation and strategy for working together and sufficiency of adopters**  DG – Adopt London have not yet formalised a sufficiency statement. They have regular meetings and have done a bit of work with Kevin Yong. And now have new data will do some more work, will streamline process so can present inform and inform a sufficiency strategy. The recruitment campaign focussed on needs of London.  How long is the campaign & is it sustained ? The 1st phase started in October, ends in December and have Sue who sits on national steering committee. Pilot activity of targeting recruitment of black and black Caribbean adopters has generated 8 inquiries working with Homes for Good, influencers, Christian based churches, mosques and key leaders, social media. It has not generated a huge amount on inquiries, but don’t know who has gone to which agency. Same as always the issues apply about size of accommodation, and birth children and age difference issues getting played out. Particular feature about accommodation. Do we or not continue with assessments if applicants do not have a spare room.  PACT – increase in inquiries via Home for Good  Adoption readiness is an issue. Adopt London South are developing a digital programme to help people move on the Journey to adoption readiness.  Ch advised that First for Adoption is all about this and have many resources available for prospective adopters.  WAF – also supporting prospective adopters. Does London identify regional sufficiency?  DG advised that there is a national agreed criterion about the issue of accommodation – they have thought about this as specific issue for London so broadened the criteria to be more about room for sleep and play  Adopt London leads are working on a 3 year strategy.  Ambitious for Adoption – have got a working group with a black adopter a representative who is involved in Adopt London BLM consultation.  JF – considered that for over 12 months there was a working group on this – the challenge is we are still keeping in mind translating macro to micro to make sure it improves for London children waiting. Not sure we are making a difference for children waiting in London.  Adopt London advised it was hard for RAA to prioritise as they were setting up and now with Covid impact. They need to have more conversations with VAA’s.  RAA VAA meeting but can PACT be invited to something on sufficiency.  It is boards remit to look at sufficiency – trends were predictable and are now amplified. Housing Coram is involved in an initiative. | Heads of London RAA’s  <https://wearefamilyadoption.org.uk/our-activities/waf-talks>  HE to agenda Outcome of consultation with Black adopters for next meeting  London RAA leads and VAA’s to meet and consider London region sufficiency of adopters. |
| 4. | **ASGLB data** – presented by Kevin Yong  Rather than waiting for data the pack is an example that can be used. This is data until end of March 2020 so not Covid impacted. KY highlighted the following points:  Best interest decision page 3 lower than national average  Page 4 trend is down in the region  Active family finding – e.g. Croydon has 23 children waiting at the end of March  Next table shows how long they have been waiting so Croydon only have 15 children waiting less than 4 months.  Q2 data will be interesting to see how many children waiting at the end of March are now placed.  Demographics of children waiting – across England majority single white no disability. For London it is different where waiting children are from BME background.  Conversion of best interest decisions to PO and where there was a subsequent change of plan – needs analysis.  The adopter gap – pretty static over last couple of years. 15 % waiting at end of Dec 2019 are placed by March. But this is a low percentage so many children are stuck. 42% gap of families available and children waiting across country is 3% this includes VAA numbers.  Approvals are on a downward trend. Graph goes up and down as families disappear so something to keep an eye on.  Adopter journey – will change as RAA’s settle down.  Comments  Carol – pointed out the disjuncture when the kindred research for London showed the highest propensity of getting adopters but now has biggest gap. Over last 10 years actions haven’t changed the picture. Compared to others are there indicators how to address it? North east has pretty big gap too. London’s doesn’t include VAA’s so working out how to do this without double counting. London has diverse communities to link with. Lambeth did a specific BME focus recruitment and need to see outcomes of this. Needs special strategy across 5 RAA’s to address this  AS this can this be picked up by RAA’s ?  KO – Special Guardianship data is this being gathered and what is possible?  KY Only collect aggregate numbers Q4 just published, would love to collect details child and carer level but requires work and consensus from LA’s and whether they have capacity.  KY talking with CAFCASS already and exploring what SG data CAFCASS can provide. Steve Crocker heads up data – can include consulting with him.  Plan share the board meeting when we have up to date data. Q2 submission data end of October extension given. Hoping to have data early December then can present at 26/1/21  Main board also pencilled for that date need to check time - but it is in the afternoon.  New chair of the leadership board might be announced in December but not likely to be in post in time for January meeting. | The board had considered getting a survey on ADM decisions, but no-one identified to complete this.  Action – a conversation for potential for SG data AS, KO and KY. LA’s do provide data without extra burden.  MC – CAFCASS to consider what data they have and conversation with analytics as outcomes of SGO’s – will join. HE to schedule a meeting. |
| 5. | **Special Guardians and Kinship care – Impact of Covid 19 and next steps for supporting families**  Presented slides – to be circulated.  <https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/news/grandparents-plus-launches-new-film/>  Grandparents Plus developed a specific rapid response – peer support, one-to-one support, advice and information. Reach services in London – 41 virtual support groups running. Key themes from 1:1 support. Professional Julia Holt webinar in June on Child on parent violence. Advice from LA is to call police which is seen as particularly unhelpful. BAME increased anxiety of risk to Covid. Kinship response : London case Studies. Learning : benefits of collaboration with LA’s. Beyond Covid – national survey data, national policy and working groups.  ? Adopt London is working with Grandparents Plus but is there a case to be made for regionalisation of Special guardianship services ? is a key point and all struggle with the disparate nature of services across the boroughs. RAA’s have taken lead as have got the money from ASF but disconnect between RAA and boroughs. Needs to be consistent across country as would make coordination of support easier.  Parliamentary working group – they are looking at adoption law. AS is on this group.  Adopt London South – CPV interventions where didn’t have SG’s coming forward but in North were oversubscribed. So, shows how longer needed to bring SG’s with them, the service gets established and families know how to get help. ALS wanted to extend the C19 funding as it has taken longer for SG families to come forward. Need LA’s to invest in it internally.  Lesson learnt that support can be commissioned on a scale when given funds directly. Even if RAA doesn’t have SG in remit the LA’s do so need to have conversations with them. Considering when the plan for adoption doesn’t happen and need to have more debate as to how they leave care and broader consideration of what permanency means. | Kate O’Brien & Kelly McDonagh (Grandparents plus)  Action – will consider if there is learning for ADCS or policy committee – AS |
| 8. | **AOB** – make Special Guardianship first on the agenda  Will review if in person or not but higher attendance virtually  **Additional notes as ran out of time in the meeting.**  **Adoption, Fostering and Special Guardianship network meetings** have taken place virtually in partnership with Fostering Network. These have had a focus during the Covid pandemic and lockdown about sharing best practice, understanding of amendments to legislation and regulations, how to support children, carers and staff. The meetings have been well attended with average 20 boroughs being represented at each. As the meetings are virtual and for maximum 1.5 hours we have held repeat sessions on different days and video platforms for greatest accessibility. Meetings held: 29/4/2020, 30/04/2020, 1/05/2020, 11/6/2020, 12/6/2020, 29/9/2020 30/09/2020 Through the discussions we identified themes and have then had learning seminars with external speakers.  30/7/2020 part 1 Executive Functioning for fostering services Imogen Shelley-Moore Connections in Mind Foundation. Part 2 Black Lives Matter – Fostering Network  11/11/2020 part 1 Transgender Variance – Tor Docherty New Family Social  part 2 The Public Law Working Group Recommendations for change in approach to Special Guardianship Orders workshop – John Simmonds director CoramBAAF  Next meeting 4th December. Please contact Helen Edwards for more information. |  |
|  | Meeting ends  Next Meeting 26th January 2020 9.30-11am |  |