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3 April 2025

Dear Sarah,

I am writing to thank Adoption England and Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) leaders, for all your hard work to support adoptive families.

Adoption is a priority for this government because it can transform children's lives. It is part of our mission to give every child the best life chances, ensuring opportunity for all by breaking down barriers.

When I met you during national adoption week in October, you talked me through some of the work Adoption England had been doing with RAA leaders to improve adoption services.

You explained that your ambition was to ensure that adoption services were consistent, co-ordinated and of high quality everywhere. Where children come first, with services designed around the support they need to be safe, to be healthy and to flourish in life. We share your vision.

You have made some significant progress, setting national practice standards; testing out new ways to recruit and match adopters with children; and developing new multi-disciplinary support to families with health partners.

But there is still more to be done. We are not recruiting enough adopters, matching children quickly enough, and not all adoptive families are receiving the support they need. I want to see RAAs collaborating across regions and working more closely with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs), with a strong emphasis on innovation and best practice. I also want to see the voice of adopters and children and young people, driving change.

I recognise you can't do it alone – we will work with you to deliver this shared vision. I can today confirm that we will be providing Adoption England with £8,780,000 in 2025-2026 to help you recruit more adopters; tackle the long waits some children experience to be matched with a new family; and improve support to adoptive

families.

Recruitment

We spoke about the challenging adopter recruitment environment and that children's waiting times have recently risen because you have struggled to recruit enough adopters. You told me this was partly connected to the cost-of-living crisis, and tackling this issue and improving living standards for citizens across the UK is a key priority for this government.

We agreed on the need for national and regional recruitment campaigns to have a particular focus on finding adoptive families who are willing to adopt, older children, sibling groups, ethnic minority children and children with additional needs.

You have made good progress in increasing the diversity of adopters - for example, with 20% of adopters now identifying as LGBTQ+ as well as more adopters from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, more needs to be done to find adopters from diverse backgrounds. It is important that all adopters irrespective of their social or ethnic background have a positive experience on their adopter journey.

My ask of you in 2025-26 is to

- Build on the successes from your *You can adopt* campaign, by expanding and testing out new innovative approaches for recruiting new adopters, and dispelling longstanding myths around who is eligible to adopt.

- Support greater collaboration between RAAs working together on recruitment across regions and in partnership with VAAs.

- Ensure all RAAs provide a consistent and culturally sensitive approach to assessing and preparing adopters based on the best practice and research on the adoption experiences of Black and other ethnic minority families.

I know that you are currently developing your recruitment strategy for the coming year, and I look forward to hearing more about it when we next meet, especially how you are working to recruit more adopters from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Matching

Delay in finding a child a permanent home is a key factor which negatively affects their future life chances. The quicker adoptive children feel secure and safe the more likely they will experience a happy childhood and have good outcomes.

I know that there is a huge range of work going on in RAAs across the country on this issue. For example, the matching projects on sibling placements and children with multiple needs. You have also been holding more national and pan-regional activity days which are a brilliant way of matching adopters with children.

These initiatives are resulting in some RAAs sharing adopters and using VAA adopters, so that children are being found a match as quickly as possible. But too many children still wait too long to be matched with a new family.

I was particularly pleased to hear about the work you and colleagues have done to increase the proportion of children in an Early Permanence placement from 14% to 23%. This is hugely impressive, particularly as provision across the country was previously patchy. This will have such a significant impact for the youngest adopted children as they receive the security and stability from their new family much quicker.

My ask of you in 2025-26 is to:

- Put in place new processes and procedures to speed up the sharing of adopters across RAAs for children who wait the longest, so that potential adopters in other RAAs and VAAs are considered quicker – within a short period of the court placement order being given,

- Expand and spread the innovative practice developed in your matching projects you have been testing out in the last two years.

- Continue to expand and promote Early Permanence placements in all RAAs, including raising awareness of the benefits of such placements amongst wider stakeholders, including the courts.

Adoption Support

I know you share my vision for all adoptive families to receive ongoing support from the moment the child is placed with them and throughout their childhood.

I was pleased to hear about the work you are doing to develop consistent and high-quality adoption support provision across the country. This includes creating your "Becoming a Family" framework for an early support core offer which covers the first 12 to 18 months after placement, as well as developing the new Adoption Support Plan to give families information and guidance including how they can access help.

The development of multidisciplinary teams in seven RAA Centres of Excellence are enabling families to receive holistic support and have proven to have had a big impact on child emotional wellbeing, and parent/child relationships. You explained how some parents described a 'transformational' change in their child and family.

But I know that excellent practice developed by some is not consistently available everywhere and there remains variation in the quality and delivery of services. I have also heard from adoptive families in crisis who had not had a good response when they ask for help, and this can lead to adoption breakdown.

My ask of you in 2025-26 is to:

- Ensure each adopted child has an individual adoption support plan at the point of placement, which identifies current and future needs and how these are being regularly reviewed.

- Develop and make sustainable Centres of Excellence in more RAAs, working closely with health and education partners to develop 3–5-year plans.

- Put in place services that can respond quickly and effectively to adoptive families in crisis, including trauma-trained professionals, who provide evidence-based support.

Conclusion

The work that you and colleagues are doing is helping to transform the lives of adoptive children and their families across the country. But I know you recognise the need you to go faster and further, so all adopted children grow up in a family with the love, care and support they need to achieve and thrive.

I would be grateful if you could keep me regularly updated on progress and would welcome a meeting in April to hear about how you intended to use the Department's funding to drive change during 2025-26.

Yours sincerely,



Janet Daby MP
Minister for Children and Families