



APPG: Inaugural Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, 4th March 2025, 17:00 – 18:00PM

Room P, Portcullis House, House of Commons

Parliamentary Attendees: Rachael Maskell MP (Chair), Lord Russell of Liverpool (Co-Chair), Baroness Berridge (Officer), Darren Paffey MP, Lord Watson of Invergowrie, Joel Hircock (attending on behalf of John Glen MP)

Speakers: Sarah Johal (National Adoption Strategic Lead), Siobhan Rhodes (Inquiry Steering Committee)

Secretariat: Alison Woodhead (Adoption UK), Katharine Slocombe (Adoption UK), Sam Lomas (Home for Good), Tarn Bright (Home for Good), Hannah Greer (Home for Good)

Guests: Anna Sharkey (Adoption Focus/CVAA), Anya Sizer

Apologies: Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, Lord Austin of Dudley

1. Welcome and Introductions

Rachael Maskell MP (Chair) welcomed attendees and outlined the importance of the APPG on Adoption and Permanence in providing a parliamentary forum for discussions on adoption and permanency-related issues. She introduced the key speakers and secretariat members supporting the meeting.

2. Election of Officers

Rachael Maskell MP chaired the formal proceedings for the election of officers. The following officers were duly elected by consensus:

- **Chair:** Rachael Maskell MP
- **Co-Chair:** Lord Russell of Liverpool
- **Officers:** Baroness Berridge, Bill Esterson MP

The APPG's purpose statement was reiterated reflecting a strong focus on adoptees of all ages, ensuring their voices and experiences inform parliamentary policy and practice.

3. Key Policy Updates and Parliamentary Developments

Rachael Maskell MP provided updates on several key areas:

- **Education Select Committee Inquiry into Children's Social Care** – The committee is scrutinising children's social care reforms.
- **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill** – The concerning lack of inclusion of adoption related policy issues was highlighted. Rachael Maskell MP shared assurances from the Secretary of State for Education that further legislation will come this parliament. Adoption UK shared an update about an amendment they had tabled to ensure government considers support for adoptees as part of the Bill.
- **Action:** Katharine Slocombe promised to keep the Group updated on developments
- **Adoption England Strategy** – Sarah Johal shared an update on the progress made through the Adoption England Strategy. Sarah highlighted the work being done to hear directly from young adoptees and welcomes the APPG's proposed inquiry.
- **Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund (ASGSF)** – Concerns were raised over the lack of long-term financial commitment beyond March 2025.
- **Action:** Officers agreed to keep parliamentary pressure on DfE to make an announcement, including tabling parliamentary questions and raising the issue with ministers
- **Self-Employed Adoption** – Home for Good gave a short briefing on the ongoing financial difficulties facing self-employed adopters, a topic covered by the APPG in a mini-inquiry in 2022. The issue was spotlighted during a parliamentary debate in January 2025, in which DWP Minister committed to write to the forthcoming Review of Parental Leave system.
- **Action:** Rachael Maskell agreed to write to relevant Ministers on behalf of the Group re-stating the case and our evidence.

4. Questions and Open Discussion

- **Lord Russell of Liverpool (co-chair)** emphasised the need for strong case studies to demonstrate best practice in adoption services. He enquired about the development and delivery of services, particularly in youth voice agencies, highlighting the challenge of limited funding and the need to identify resources within existing budgets.
- **Sarah Johal (Speaker)** noted that having 34 Regional Adoption Agencies helps share best practices, citing Adoption East Midlands as an example. Lord Russell further stressed the importance of case studies to demonstrate effective practices.

- **Alison Woodhead (Secretariat)** noted that financial strain for adopters is a frequent and growing concern.
- **Action:** Lord Russell of Liverpool requested a briefing on the financial challenges facing self-employed adopter as the Employment Rights Bill progresses to the Lords.

6. Inquiry into the Experiences of Young Adoptees (Aged 13–25)

Siobhan Rhodes provided an overview of the proposed APPG inquiry into the needs of adopted young people aged 13–25. Key points included:

- The inquiry will be led by a steering group of young adoptees. *“You know they just don’t get it”* – adoptee. Ensuring authentic voice is at the heart.
- Areas of focus: identity, mental health support, access to life story information, education, and transition to adulthood.
- The inquiry will gather evidence through surveys, roundtable discussions, and contributions from adoptees.
- The focus of the final report will be through the lens of the Government’s Opportunity Mission.

Discussion Points:

- **Anya Sizer** emphasized the importance of including young people with lived experience of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and suggested reaching out to National FASD to encourage their network to feed into the Inquiry.
- **Rachael Maskell MP** encouraged MPs can engage with adoption issues within their constituencies.
- **Darren Paffey MP** raised a question about the Inquiry’s proposed focus on adoptive teens, asking whether the data would include those who are no longer teenagers, but are reflecting back on their teenage years. The secretariat confirmed that the inquiry would be open to 13 – 25 year olds, and those within that age range who are no longer teenagers (20 – 25) would still feed in to the survey with their recent teenage experience in mind.
- **Katharine Slocombe** noted challenges in capturing survey data from younger teens.
- **Sarah Joel** noted that adoption agency adoptee groups were highly vocal, referencing the National Youth Forum. She also highlighted a gap in support during the transition to adulthood, particularly in access to life story records and birth families.

7. Summary and Next Steps

- **Self-Employed Adopters:** The APPG will engage relevant ministers and departments to push for financial parity.
- **Adoption and Special Guardianship Support Fund:** Continued parliamentary pressure for multi-year funding.
- **Young Adoptees Inquiry:** Steering committee to finalise inquiry structure and launch evidence-gathering.
- **Policy development:** APPG will monitor legislative developments and contribute to discussions on the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

Rachael Maskell MP thanked attendees for their contributions.

Meeting Adjourned at 18:00.