

New government support for adoptive families

Adoptive families and children are set to benefit from a multi-million pound investment into programmes aimed at helping them overcome past trauma, the Education Secretary announced in a speech today.

Gavin Williamson announced further funding for the Adoption Support Fund ensuring every family that needs it will be able to get therapeutic support until 2021. The commitment builds on the £130m already invested through the fund, which has benefitted over 40,000 families.

The Education Secretary also announced almost £650,000 investment into Regional Adoption Agencies, who will coordinate work to find more adopters across the country, especially for harder to place children, such as siblings, older children and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. This will include targeted digital work and work with black churches and mosques to increase the numbers of people from BAME communities coming forward to adopt.

The Adoption Support Fund has provided things like cognitive therapy, play and music therapy, and family support sessions. This much needed support can help children come to terms with their difficulties – giving them the confidence to build strong relationships with their new family.

Speaking at Coram for National Adoption Week, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

“This government will do everything we can to help support young people into an adoptive home and we’re tapping into the expertise of the wonderful people that work in this sector. In recent years, the trend that concerns us all is the disparity between numbers of children awaiting adoption and adoptive families ready to take them. This is a trend that must change and I want to do everything I can to help you do that.

“We have cut the average time between a child entering care and being placed with a family by seven months since 2012. It’s now down to 14 months. Obviously there is still substantial room for improvement. It still takes too long and not all adoptive families receive the support they need. But we’re definitely going in the right direction.

“Our adoption support fund which was set up in 2015, has provided a range of therapeutic support for nearly 50,000 children who have been through traumatic times before adoption. I am delighted to announce that we are going to extend this fund through to 2021, so families can now continue to access therapy support.”

Dr Carol Homden, CEO of Coram, said:

“We welcome the government’s renewed commitment to adoption recruitment and

support, particularly at a time when more adopters are urgently needed for the children waiting.

“At Coram we have long recognised the transformative effect that early therapeutic support can have on adopted children and their families. For children who have experienced a difficult start in life, it is vital that the right help can be accessed quickly and easily.

“The availability of consistent and timely post-adoption support is crucial in encouraging prospective adopters to come forward, and we hope the funding boost announced today will enable the recruitment of a wide range of adopters, and help all adoptive families to thrive.”

This funding boost will enable experts to focus on finding adopters from a range of communities and backgrounds for children, ensuring no child is left behind and every child is given a safe, loving permanent home as quickly as possible.

The drive towards improving the adoption process for families continues alongside the Department’s investment in programmes that help keep children with their birth families, when safe to do so. Across the country, local authorities are taking part in programmes that focus on tackling the issues that cause families to fall apart and children to enter care in the first place, including parents’ drug addiction, domestic abuse or mental health problems.

The investment comes as the latest data shows there were 2,700 children waiting for adoption, with almost 40 per cent who have waited over 18 months. Of these, 24% were from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, so the recruitment drive will have a particular focus on finding families for these children, as well as other harder to place groups, including siblings and older children.

It was also announced that four new London regional adoption agencies (RAAs) are now live, which are speeding up the time it takes to match children and families. RAAs are live in 70% of the country, with remaining local authorities expected to have joined by 2020.