

Building Bridges for Vulnerable Children

Natalie Mills, Policy and Research Officer

“It takes a village to raise a child, but it takes a well-resourced and well-armed, supportive village to raise an adoptive child.”

These words embody the heart of our advocacy at Home for Good. Recognising the great joys and accompanying challenges when children and young people are welcomed into new homes, we want to call individuals, influencers and policymakers to recognise the vital role they have to play in actively supporting and championing vulnerable children and their welcoming families. One step we have taken towards this is to establish the new All-Party Parliamentary Group for Adoption and Permanence, or APPGAP.

In July 2018, Home for Good was approached by Rachael Maskell MP (York Central), to partner with her in establishing this cross-party group to raise the profile in Parliament of adoptive families and those offering permanence. Having heard stories from constituents, she identified a gap in opportunities within Parliament for the experiences and voices of adoptive families to be heard. In partnership with Adoption UK, Home for Good is providing the secretariat for this new APPG.

In this work, we see ourselves as a bridge between children and families and parliamentarians and policymakers, facilitating much-needed conversation around the reality of caring for a vulnerable child through adoption and other forms of permanence. But as we create spaces and opportunities for stories and experiences to be heard, we want to advocate differently.

DEFINITIONS

All-Party Parliamentary Group: an informal, crossparty group formed by MPs and Members of the House of Lords who share a common interest in a particular policy area, region or country.

Secretariat: the people responsible for the management and administration of an APPG.

Home for Good’s value of being hopeful makes us countercultural in our approach. Against the gloomy voices that can dominate Parliament and the media, our engagement is underlined by a relentless sense of hope for vulnerable children and young people. Whilst we’re unafraid to raise the stark issues and challenge the system as it stands, we’re equally as committed to offering solutions, believing that practice and norms do not have to stay as they are.

Children and young people can be given the tools and the opportunities to thrive if everyone plays their part. Our first activity as a group has been to run an inquiry into the Adoption Support

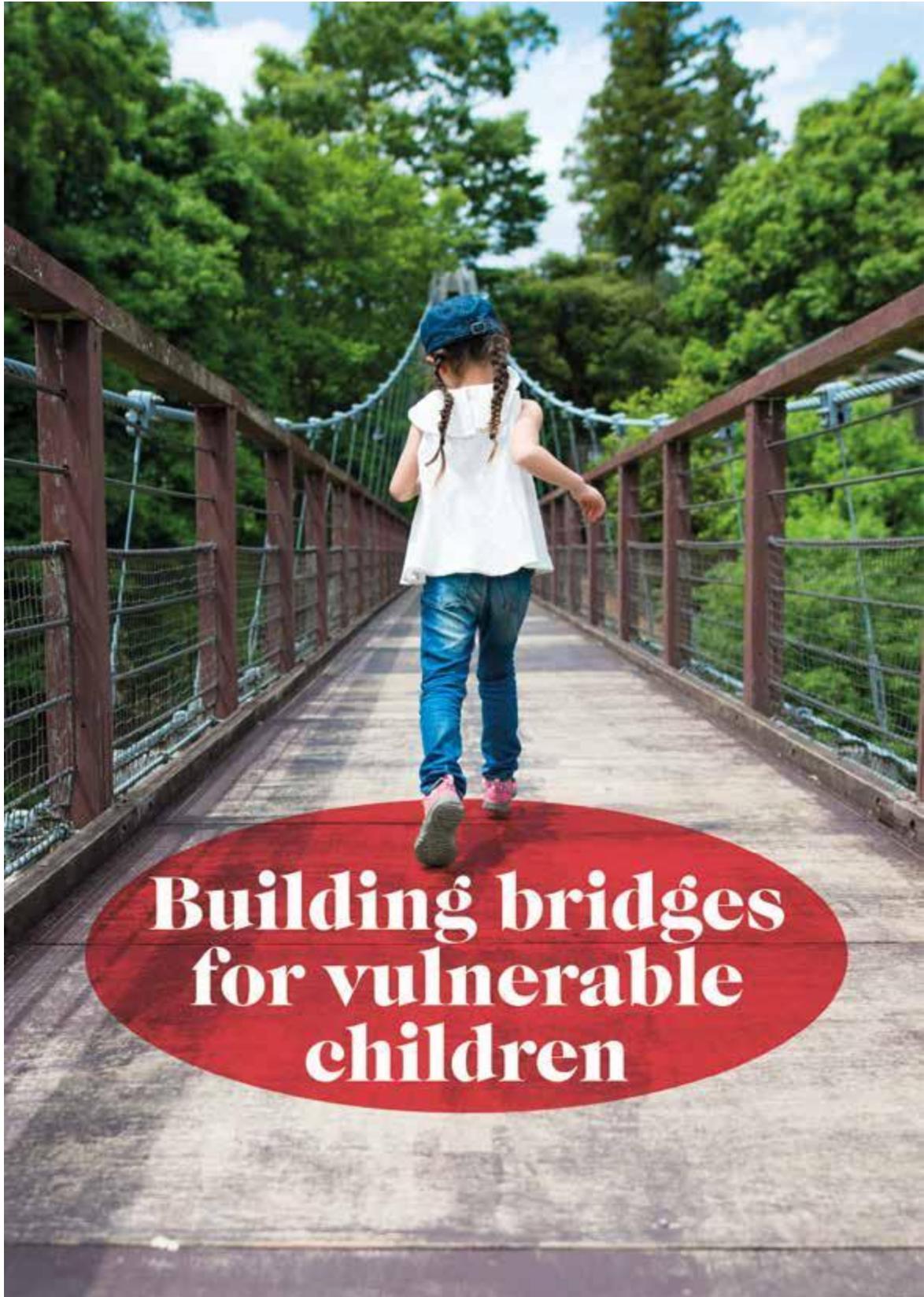
Fund, which has been providing vital therapeutic support for families since 2015, but is currently only guaranteed until 2020.

More than 1600 individuals responded to our consultation survey, including nearly 250 adopted children. Through a series of evidence sessions in Parliament, it has been exciting to witness Parliamentarians and decision-makers be impacted and become informed by the stories shared and the expertise offered by a range of stakeholders.

This inquiry will culminate in a report produced in July 2019 , encouraging the Government to continue funding this important provision and giving recommendations as to how it can better serve children, young people and their families.

The opening words of this article were spoken by an adoptive parent. Through this group we're enabling people from influential spheres to be part of this supportive and well-armed village and play their part in supporting vulnerable children and families. Our hope and prayer is that as we continue, the currently obscured voices of the most important – those of care experienced children and their families – will begin to reverberate through the corridors of power, activating those within to take their place as villagers.

This new APPG is a very important opportunity to advocate for some of the most vulnerable children in society...adopted children have had a very tough start in life and they deserve the attention of policy makers to ensure they are able to build a better future. -Rachael Maskell MP



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