

# BAAF Survey of Individual Members 2006

## A Summary

Questionnaires asking members to comment on the value of services provided by BAAF, and on the impact of the work BAAF does, were sent to our 1540 individual members in 2006. Two hundred and ninety one completed forms were returned, a response rate of 18.9%.

We thank all the individual members who took the time to respond and provide us with valuable data that will inform our work and the service we offer individual members. Below we summarise the results.

**The Member Profile** “I have always greatly valued my BAAF membership & have been a member for over 25 years. The publications are always excellent – it is just difficult finding the time to read them! I have recently been doing a professional course (PQ2-5) and found all my BAAF publications invaluable for the essay writing.”

### Gender and Age

The majority of those who completed the questionnaire, 82.1%, were female. Almost 71% were aged between 45 and 64. Only 6.2% were under 35 years. We are disappointed that we do not have more members in the lower age ranges but this is consistent with previous surveys. It seems to suggest that membership is more likely to be taken when a definite career path has been settled on.

### Occupations and Employers

The respondents were from a range of occupations. Doctors, social workers and lawyers were prominent as they form the bulk of our membership. Nurses and other health professionals returned another 9% of the questionnaires and children’s guardians a similar proportion. Not everyone told us what they worked for but 69% of those that did were in the statutory sector. Almost 10% were in the private sector and 7.5% worked for voluntary organisations. 5% were academics.

■

### Membership

*“I am really pleased with all the information and help I have received”.*

### Length of Membership and Satisfaction

About half of members had joined BAAF in the last five years and half had been members for longer. These figures reflect a good recruitment rate and the enduring value of our membership services. Almost 65% of respondents rated their membership as “excellent” and only 1.4% thought it “poor value”. 97% were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the way their membership was administered.

■

## Membership Services

### Electronic Services

*“I do intend to use the Web site more now that I have the password and can access the members’ area”.*

#### Internet

All but a small number of members had Internet access at work and home. And in the majority of cases it was high-speed broadband access. This is a big change from when we last surveyed members in 2002. Then 25% could not use the Internet at work and 10% had no access at home.

#### Web site

Unfortunately a significant minority had had difficulty accessing the members’ area or navigating in our Web site. We are looking at what can be done to improve this.

#### Electronic Media

Members are most likely to use the Web site to find information on legal, policy and practice matters, to get information about training activities and to look up statistics. Practice notes were the most popular online publication. A majority of members prefer print to electronic publications but a third like to have them available in both formats. Although 25% used the site for information on our publications, only 2 in 10 took advantage of the online bookshop.

#### Improvements

A number of people said they had made little use of the Web site. Among the ideas for improvements were:

- More research news, policy analysis and practice guidance.
- Member forums
- A directory of medical advisers



## General Services

### Publications

*“I usually find it very hard to make a choice with the publications because they are all relevant”.*

Our publications, particularly the books, the *Adoption & Fostering* journal and practice notes, were the most highly valued of individual membership benefits. Our books were rated as “useful” or “very useful” by almost 97% of respondents. The figure for *Adoption & Fostering* was 95% and that for practice notes 93%. BAAF’s advice and information services and our discounts on conference fees were also said to be “useful” or “very useful” by around 80% of members. The members’ area of the Web site and our fortnightly email bulletin were less highly rated. The figures suggest that this may in part be because many members were not aware of or had not taken advantage of these services.

### Training

*“All the workshops I have attended have been excellent in content and presentation”.*

A majority of members who returned questionnaires had attended a BAAF conference or workshop. 95% of them rated the events they had attended as “good” or “very good”. Some members drew our attention to fees they found to high to allow their attendance.

## Relevance of Services

Almost 22% of those who had been members for two years or longer thought BAAF had become more relevant. Of the rest, about 70% said there had been no change and a small number, 4.2%, saw less relevance in our membership services. Only 9% said there were matters they wanted BAAF to pay more attention to.

### Improvements

*“More relevant workshops – i.e. on current law and procedure”.*

*“Role of children’s guardians, never see an article about this at all”.*

There was no particular theme to the ideas that members offered when we asked how they would like us to improve our services. We were asked to run courses closer to home and to open an office in Ireland. Although a good majority of members were satisfied with the range of the publications we offer, others asked for a wider choice. A number wanted more information on particular areas of interest including adoption, the law and health, sibling placements, adoption support, inter-country adoption, infertility, contact and education.

### Satisfaction

Only 3% expressed some dissatisfaction about their membership. These seemed mostly to be to do with isolated problems, to which we are paying attention. Others were dissatisfied with the choice of books offered, the location or cost of training and Web site usability.

### Our Scope

Almost 80% of members agreed that it would be helpful if BAAF paid more attention to the needs of looked after children in general, not just those fostered or adopted. Some stressed that the quality of our current services should not be compromised by this.



## Legal, Health and Research Groups

BAAF’s Research, Health and Legal Groups exist to improve understanding and information exchange between members, and to promote good practice.

### The Benefits

24% of respondents were members of the Health Group. Of those, 94% said that they found their membership of the Group "useful" or "very useful". Fewer of those taking part in the survey were members of the Legal Groups but again the vast majority, 88%, found membership "useful" or "very useful". Even fewer respondents were members of the smaller Research Group, but 92% said their membership was "useful" or "very useful". Regional or local Group meetings had been attended by 35% of Group members and regional forums were the most highly regarded benefit of Group membership, followed by training events. Many also saw a directory of members as an advantage of Group membership. Being able to vote in the elections of advisory committees came at the bottom of the list.

### Improvements

*“Maybe join up meetings occasionally for legal and health group – to aid quality of report provision for example”.*

We asked if there were ways that members thought we might improve the benefits of belonging to a Group. Among the ideas were:

- Evening events.
- Publication of more research findings.
- Lower fees for conferences.
- More attention to the needs of Health Group members who are not doctors or nurses.
- More local events.

### **Professional Concerns**

We also asked whether there were any professional concerns that BAAF should pay more attention to. Only 3.4% said there were. Among the requests were:

- The role of legal advisers.
- Post-adoption services.
- Fees paid to medical advisers.
- The role of adopted people in policy and practice.
- The consequences of cuts in spending and services.
- Guidance on tests for blood borne viruses
- The mental health of foster carers.
- Obesity and prospective adopters.
- The respective roles of doctors and nurses.
- Improved forms.



**BAAF and the Outside World**     *“BAAF seems to pop up whenever there is an issue relating to looked after children in the news and I can count on the BAAF rep. always to say something that is sensible”.*

BAAF puts great effort into informing and persuading policy makers, the news media and the public about the needs of children who are separated from their birth families, and about our point of view on the important issues of the day.

92% agreed that it was important for BAAF to do this work. 65% thought BAAF had had success in informing and educating the public. A similar majority believed we had successfully influenced legislators and civil servants.

Respondents acknowledged the difficulties we face in this work and suggested a number of ways we might make adoption and fostering better understood.

### **Conclusion**

*“As always BAAF membership represents excellent value for money. The quantity and quality of what members receive is beyond compare to any other professional organisation”.*

We are pleased that again individual members seem in general to be highly satisfied with the services we provide. That will not make us complacent and we will continue to review what we do and try to improve our services. The results of this survey and of our agency membership survey, which was conducted at the same time, will be used to help us do so.

### **Don't Wait**

Members' opinions are always welcome. There is no need to wait for the next survey to tell us what you think. If you have any comments on our services to members please let the Membership Officer know.

