

Systemic Review Appendix

key findings & section-linked supplementary references

Part 1 – Key Findings

These key findings summarise the systemic failings identified through the PATCH Systems Review, reflecting major structural, cultural, and operational gaps within the UK adoption system.

1. Permanence is not an endpoint

The system assumes adoption resolves trauma, resulting in support being withdrawn precisely when families need it most.

2. No UK-wide trauma assessment framework

There is no national clinical model guiding trauma assessment or intervention for adopted children.

3. A pervasive culture of blame

Adoptive parents are frequently held responsible for trauma-driven behaviours, discouraging help-seeking.

4. Children placed without sufficient assessment

Multidisciplinary evaluation of trauma, neurodevelopment, sensory profiles, and health needs is inconsistent or absent.

5. Regulatory barriers restrict access to therapeutic support

Most independent therapists are structurally excluded from working with adopted children.

6. Funding reductions are causing material harm

A 60% reduction in per-child support funding forces families to choose between assessment and intervention.

7. Autism assessments cannot be funded through ASF

Despite high prevalence of autism-like profiles, diagnostic assessments are excluded from statutory funding streams.

8. NICE guidelines are unsuitable for adopted children

They do not account for layered trauma, atypical neurodevelopment, or complex presentations.

9. Highly inconsistent post-adoption support nationwide

Therapeutic access varies significantly across the 32 Regional Adoption Agencies.

10. Allegation handling is frequently unsafe

Police and CPS responses often fail to incorporate trauma, neurodevelopment, memory science, or contextual safeguarding.

11. No tracking of key adoption outcomes

There is no national data on breakdowns, re-entry into care, or long-term support outcomes.

12. Education systems fail to identify or support need

Trauma-responsive practice is inconsistent, SEN support is limited, and adopted children lose access to PEP oversight.

13. Crisis spending replaces prevention

High-cost crises could be avoided with earlier, lower-cost intervention.

14. Adoptive parents act as an unrecognised therapeutic workforce

Families deliver clinical-level care without training or support.

15. Failings are systemic and predictable

These are not isolated errors; they are embedded within national policy, practice, and culture.

Part 2 – Section-Linked Supplementary References

C1. Section 2.1 – Transgenerational, Prenatal & Early Trauma Factors

Supporting evidence for:

- 2.1.1 Transgenerational Perspective
- 2.1.2 Trauma & Internal Injury
- 2.1.3 Prenatal and Early Neurological Factors

Supplementary References

- Music, G. (2024). *Unsafe fetuses and risky wombs?* International Journal of Birth & Parent Education.
- Neggers, Y., Goldenberg, R., Cliver, S., & Hauth, J. (2004). *Effects of domestic violence on preterm birth and low birth weight.*
- Abbasi, M. et al. (2025). *Maternal-Fetal Attachment and Fertility Motivation in Women With and Without Experience of Violence.*
- Taal, H. (2025). *The impact of prenatal exposure to intimate partner violence on mother-child attachment.*
- Zare, E. et al. (2020/2021). *Domestic Violence in Pregnancy and Maternal-Fetal Attachment.*
- Jamali, S. et al. (2019). *Maternal and Neonatal Complications Following Domestic Violence During Pregnancy.*
- Fonagy, P., Steele, H., & Steele, M. (1991). *Maternal Representations of Attachment and Infant Attachment Outcomes.*
- Riley, E. P., Infante, M. A., & Warren, K. R. (2011). *Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders: An overview.*
- Bellingier, D. C. (2013). *Prenatal exposures to environmental chemicals and children's neurodevelopment.*
- Ayres, A. J. (2005). *Sensory Integration and the Child.*
- Miller, L. J., Anzalone, M. E., Lane, S. J., Cermak, S. A., & Osten, E. T. (2007). *Concept evolution in sensory integration: A proposed nosology for diagnosis.*

C2. Section 2.5.2 – Absence of FASD-Competent Assessment

Supports arguments regarding misdiagnosis, under-identification, and systemic gaps in FASD recognition.

Supplementary References

- Mercer, F., McIntyre, K., Lawson, M., & O'Rourke, S. (2025). *Lived Experiences of Parents of Children With FASD: A Systematic Review.*

- Mukherjee, R. (2019). *FASD: The Current Situation in the UK*.
- Canfield, M. et al. (2017). *Maternal substance use and child protection: Rapid evidence assessment*.
- Neil, E. et al. (2020). *Early adversities and long-term outcomes for adopted children*.
- Brodzinsky, D., Gunnar, M., & Palacios, J. (2022). *Adoption and trauma: Risks and recovery*.

C3. Section 2.8.3 — Scientific Understanding of Memory & Perception

Supporting concerns about allegation-handling errors.

Supplementary References

- Farroni, T., Menon, E., Rigato, S., & Johnson, M. (2007). *Infant perception of facial expressions*.
- Bayet, L. et al. (2021). *Neural responses to emotional faces in infants*.
- Research on trauma-related misinterpretation of facial expressions in early infancy (frightened vs frightening).
- Cognitive and perceptual neuroscience literature on trauma-coloured memory, confabulation, and misattribution.

C4. Section 2.9 — Matching Failings (Adopter Vulnerability & Susceptibility)

Supports concerns about infertility-related vulnerability, idealisation, and poor preparation.

Supplementary References

- Knight, S. (1998). *Importance of skin in attachment-focused art therapy*.
- Burnell, A., & Vaughan, J. (2017). *Family Futures' Neuro-Psychological Psychotherapy Approach*.

C5. Section 2.13.4 — Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma

Supports discussions of biological, relational, and psychological mechanisms of trauma transmission.

Supplementary References

- Lang, A., & Gartstein, M. (2018). *Intergenerational transmission of traumatization: Framework & prevention*.
- Knight, S. (1998). *Attachment-related art therapy approaches*.
- Burnell, A., & Vaughan, J. (2017). *Clinical assessment of traumatised children*.

C6. Cross-Cutting Sources Supporting Multiple Sections

These references are used across various themes in the systemic review:

- Adoption UK. (2025). *Adoption Barometer*.
- Selwyn, J., Wijedasa, D., & Meakings, S. (2014). *Beyond the Adoption Order*.
- Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score*.
- O'Marah, R., Hodge, S. M., & Machin, L. (2025). *Secondary Trauma in Adoptive Parents*.
- Figley, C. (2002). *Compassion Fatigue*.
- Condry, R. & Miles, C. (2014–2025). Major child-to-parent violence studies.
- NICE (2019). *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: Quality Standard*.
- UK Legislation: Adoption & Children Act; Adoption Support Agencies Regulations.
- Litman, A. et al. (2025). *Autism phenotype heterogeneity research*.

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