

Minutes

9 March 2023 | 10am – 12pm

Present:

Sariya Cheruvallil-Contractor	Coventry University	(SCC)
Florence Chiwetu	Clover Fostering Ltd	(FC)
Paulette Forbes	Sheffield Metropolitan	(PF)
Irene Levine	IAC Adoption	(IL) (chair)
Denise McLean	Independent	(DM)
Steve O’Loughlin	Independent	(SOL)
Amreen Riaz	Adoption Matters	(AR)

In Attendance:

Ellen Broome	CoramBAAF (CB)	(EB)
James Bury	CoramBAAF (CB)	(JB)
Georgina Coope	CoramBAAF (CB)	(GC) (minutes)
Liam Hoskins	CoramBAAF (CB)	(LH)
John Simmonds	CoramBAAF (CB)	(JS)

Apologies:

Bernadette Caines	Independent	(BC)
Singeta Kalhan-Gregory	St David’s Children Society	(SKG)
Amreen Riaz	Adoption Matters	(AR)
Aminah Sumpton	Independent	(AS)

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND LAST MEETING MINUTES

- 1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made.
- 1.2 No necessary adjustments to last meeting’s minutes were raised. **Members requested action points be bolded in future minutes.**
- 1.3 It was noted CB Health Committee met on Monday and discussed genetic testing update. CB Health Consultant to locate correct information to share with group.



2. **CORAMBAAF EDI STRATEGY AND EVENTS SCHEDULE**

- 2.1 CB has extensive EDI programme. Initially focused only on race and ethnicity but since expanded to cover more protected characteristics. Group feedback, support and advice on this welcome. **CB to share new programme with members at next meeting.**
- 2.2 LH gave overview of current CB events programme. EDI related events include:
- Anti-racist practice with Millie Kerr (81 attendees)
 - Commissioned RAA series with Yoni Ejo (under ambition 2- diversity) on transracial adoption, family finding and adoption assessment
 - DM Exploring Expertise webinar on Sibling Reunions from a professional and personal perspective.
- 2.3 June onwards is an open schedule. CB events team welcome suggestions for speakers or themes that could be covered through a professional development lens (as audience mainly social workers.)
- 2.4 SCC Nuffield funded research project is on self-expression and what identity means to young people. Happy to deliver talk on project. Focus on intersectional identity emphasising ethnicity and race. Also covers sexuality, unaccompanied asylum seekers etc. SCC already presented to over 650 frontline social workers including some CB members. **LH to contact SCC.**
- 2.5 SOL suggested running an event for London social workers who work with black boys. More black boys in care in London area than anywhere else. Good to get insight on why. Tensions between placing near family but away from gang culture. Important to help black boys have positive identity around culture and heritage. DM noted black boys not being adopted and staying in care longer (perhaps coming into care later?) **CB to research existing projects/ charities covering this.**
- 2.6 SCC interviews with black boys show huge amounts of racism experienced, not just in London. Happy to share these stories with group if helpful.
- 2.7 PF noted Black Care Experience may have additional information or support available. Felt BCE Conference quite London centric. CB Fostering Consultant also has links there.
- 2.8 **Separate group to form to reflect on this topic further.** JS suggested approaching Coram Voice Bright Spots, as already have data on young people's experiences of care and subjective wellbeing levels. Could ask to run specific report on black boys. **EB to ask Coram Voice to present at future meeting.** Lots of published material available on [Bright Spots website](#).
- 2.9 SCC noted Roma children disproportionately overrepresented in care system. **Can forward resources on Roma children research to group.** An under researched issue that merits ongoing discussion. **Can connect CB with research contact.** Previous research on Roma children carried out by Paul Adams. EB acknowledged Roma children under-resourced, marginalized and receive largest numbers of funding rejections. LAs struggle to support Roma communities. Niche area due



to lack of information, but interesting to look into. **SCC and CB to share resources with each other.**

- 2.10 IAC working with black therapists on trauma informed therapy to support black children of different minority-ethnic groupings and ensuring significance of appropriate matches understood. Current therapies offered don't necessarily meet needs. IL suggested joint training/ promotion with CB. **IL and Marie to prep for future discussion with CB.** IAC also launching online training. Interviewed 10 adult adoptees connected with international adoption about experiences of transracial/transcultural placements.
- 2.11 SOL suggested appointing a psychiatrist to committee.
- 2.12 CB events interested in covering black professional career progression in social work. Aware of current lack of black leaders and senior managers and would like to explore contributing factors. Members agreed topic important and worthwhile. **CB to add to next meeting agenda to discuss how could be taken further.**
- 2.13 JS raised Krish Kandiah discussions with Staff College about curriculum. Trying to develop curriculum that gives confidence to minority-ethnic workforce, particularly regarding senior management positions. **May be willing to attend committee meeting to hear member thoughts on this.** IL agreed training and confidence important, but also about selection process and providing support for workers once positions gained. Need to look at other barriers such as workers being targeted for not fulfilling desired agendas.
- 2.14 SCC seen black staff labelled as trouble makers for asking 'too many' questions about identity. Alternately, they are put on a pedestal and viewed as oracles of all things black which is equally unhelpful. Clear institutional issues. SCC put in grant application to heritage lottery fund to capture histories of black social workers. Will keep group updated on progress.
- 2.15 **EB to set up specific sessions to discuss black boys' experiences and black career progression in more detail. Members to email CB to express interest in either topic discussion group.**

3. CARE REVIEW IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- 3.1 JB presented overview of government implementation strategy. Sets out three consultations (agency workers, implementation strategy, framework and dashboard) with responses due 11 May.
- Care review called for £2.6 billion over 2 years but strategy announced £2 million over 2 years.
 - DfE National Adoption Strategy running alongside implementation strategy; can't make changes to courts which come under MoJ.
 - Kicked off many local pilots, including RCCs.
 - Kinship strategy expected by year's end.



- Will update family and friends guidance.
- 3.2 Visible gap in focus in identity and ethnicity. Committee welcome to address these. Members disappointed issues around black children, families and professionals overlooked. James to send document around. IL and JS noted Krish's fed into care review. DfE gave permission for disparity report to be published, but appear to not be recognising it. Government response to House of Lords post legislative enquiry of children and family act 2014 stated Krish Kandiah's report accepted in full. This doesn't match up with other work coming from the same department.
 - 3.3 Josh Macalister expressed anger at response and significant money decrease. Supposed to be advisor to implementation group but in very difficult position.
 - 3.4 Including and prioritising kinship care should involve very specific issues kinship families from many ethnicities, cultures and religions face. Response moving forward must recognise diversity of these families.
 - 3.5 Members questioned whether responding to review would be best use of time and energy, as change unlikely to occur as a result. Past responses not taken forward, so limited impact likely. EB and JB suggested members able to make useful suggestions regarding proposed dashboard and how support for children's identity could be measured. Members agreed KPIs important. Better than nothing and would show group not complicit or in agreement.
 - 3.6 Sariya and JS sit on national adopter recruitment steering group which does consider issues around ethnicity and religion, so these discussions set to continue.
 - 3.7 EB suggested writing blog for DfE to illustrate disappointment, emphasising how professional experiences shows addressing identity needs key. EB happy to ghost write with members. Can post on CB website and share on social media to demonstrate problems have been noticed. **IL happy to take lead on this.**

4. BMEPAC PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Irene summarised BMEPAC proposal and the structure of other CB committees. Suggested importance of not working in isolation and forming strategic connections with these other committees to share discussion points. All members welcome to attend Black Workers Practice Forums, which act as support group as well as policy discussion group.
- 4.2 Members discussed potential group cross overs that could be explored to maximise impact. All AC groups have responsibility to look at issues from anti-racist perspective, so how this this group join in more with this? Understand don't have capacity to fully join two committees, but maybe select members with relevant professional backgrounds could attend now and again to feedback. If multiple members identified this role could be shared to reduce workload. Members also to look at who from other committees could occasionally attend BMEPAC.
- 4.3 Members agreed this a positive way forward. Suggestions for future connections were:
 - SCC- Research Committee
 - DM- Fostering Committee



- PF- Adoption Committee

4.4 **EB suggested connecting the above three groups** to start with, then expand later if works well. **CB to discuss with other AC chairs and consultants to explain proposal and sort out rota.**

5. **BLACK CARE EXPERIENCE CHARTER**

- 5.1 EF summarised recent **Black Care Experience Conference** and explained role of Black Care Experience Network, founded by Judith Denton.
- 5.2 Conference launched **Black Care Experience Charter**. Organisations encouraged to sign up to at least 1 of 8 commitments. EF summarised 8 commitments. Any individuals or teams in sector can join BCE network, but charter aimed at encouraging whole organisations.
- 5.3 PF attended BCE Conference. Interesting workforce training discussions on ease of ticking boxes but not translating to practice. Very London focused and could have talked more about North/South divide (e.g. Manchester black hair dressers working with city council to support foster carers.) Paulette found care experienced panel very emotive. Spoke with Judith about vetting questions that didn't provide answers relevant to practitioners raising a black child in care. All panel members supported before event, with access to therapist afterwards.
- 5.4 Regarding earlier conversation around black boys, EF suggested topic could be covered in future BCE Network newsletter.
- 5.5 EB mentioned CB ongoing discussion on terminology and how preferences subjective. EDI steering group putting together guidance incorporating ethnicity, sexuality, gender etc. Intend to speak with BMEPAC about this and will be contacting individual members via email for advice.

6. **FAMILY JUSTICE COUNCIL ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

- 6.1 JS summarised conference which focused on trauma and family justice system.
- 6.2 Included presentation by clinical psychologist on significance of trauma. Recognised family justice system traumatic in itself.
- 6.3 Presentation from CAFCAS children's board included four young people talking of family justice system experiences, highlighting long term traumatic impact of not being listened to.
- 6.4 Other presentations included first-hand account of domestic abuse and Southall Black Sisters founder Pragma Patel.
- 6.5 Judges, barristers and lawyers listened to speakers explain what they do is traumatising. Ethnicity, culture, religion and language plays significant part, but issues effect white families and individuals as well. Potential for BMEPAC to explore understanding of trauma, particularly in relation to BME women. **Possible future agenda topic within or outside of committee.** Chair Andrew McFarlane questioned what happens next in light of revelations. Next steps unclear but JS hopeful message continues to spread. **CB to discuss and feedback.**



7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 No other business was raised.

Date of next meeting: 24 May 2024

ACTION POINTS UPDATE:

- CoramBAAF to share new EDI programme with members at next meeting. **EB to do this.**
- Liam to contact Sariya about potential research webinar on intersectional identity. Liam?
- Ellen to ask Coram Voice to present at future meeting. **Linda added to agenda on 24 May.**
- Sariya to forward resources on Roma families to members/connect CoramBAAF with research contact.
- Irene and Marie to prep future discussion with CoramBAAF on black therapists and trauma training resources.
- CoramBAAF to add discussion on black professional career progression to next agenda. **Was this meant to be an event?**
- CoramBAAF to look into Krish Kandiah attending future committee meeting. **EB has been in contact but not heard back.**
- Ellen to set up specific sessions to discuss black boys' experiences and black career progression in more detail. Members to email CB to express interest in either topic discussion group. CoramBAAF to research existing projects/charities covering experiences of black boys in London. **Liam to follow up.**
- Irene to take lead on writing blog for DfE on implementation strategy thoughts, Ellen to help. **Done.**
- CoramBAAF to connect BMEPAC with Adoption (Paulette), Research (Sariya) and Fostering (Denise) Committees. **Done.**
- CoramBAAF to consider future discussion on family justice system and trauma, particularly in relation to BME women. **Noted.**