

# Minutes

**5 October 2023 | 10.00am - 12.30pm**

## Present

Jenny Alexander-Brown	Nottingham	JAB
Hanan Al-Najjar	Waltham Forest	HAN
Dawn Elliot	Leeds	DE
Cara Jones	Chrysalis Consortium	CJ
Steven O'Reilly	TACT	SOR

## In attendance

Georgina Coope	CoramBAAF	GC
Emma Fincham	CoramBAAF	EF
Hannah Williams	Department for Education	HW

## Apologies

Nazeema Gill	Homefinding Fostering Agency	NG
Lisa Little	Hull	LL
Sam Penny	Devon	SP
Jennifer Roy	Haringey	JR
Chris Senior	Department for Education	CS

## 1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 CJ welcomed everyone to the meeting

## 2. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 2.1 *Black History Month* – CJ shared that 1<sup>st</sup> October 1987 marked the first official black history celebration in England. In the USA black history was first celebrated in 1976. Members reflected on how recent these dates feel, in light of how consistent racism has been throughout time. Members discussed ways of introducing black history to children in their care.
- 2.2 Current racist attitudes impact children and carers within the fostering system and members reflected on how much progress still needs to be made. The UK is experiencing an overall shortage of black adopters and foster carers and members recognised the varying demographics of foster carers in their areas. Black and ethnic minority children in care face additional discrimination. Members acknowledged the importance of supporting them with their identities, emphasising the need for social workers to share that information with them.

- 2.3 Experiences were shared of fostering services providing very little support and information on caring for BME young people. TACT now have their own e-learning platform which provides training on different nationalities (festivals, hair care, recipes etc.)

**Action: SOR to look into sharing TACT training resources with the committee.**

- 2.4 The Black Care Experience have two books relating to these topics:

[We Are Not The Same – African and The Caribbean](#)

[Our Hair Care, Our Skin Care](#)

- 2.5 *Black Care Experience Charter* – Waltham Forest has signed up to the Black Care Experience Charter and will be represented at their meetings going forward. CoramBAAF have also signed up to the Charter. TACT have links to the Charter through supervising social workers who actively engage their carers in EDI issues. Efforts are made at TACT to ensure social worker teams reflect foster carers in their area (in terms of ethnicity, sexuality etc.)
- 2.6 [White Nanny, Black Child](#) – Members discussed the recent documentary aired on Channel 5, which follows a group of Nigerians fostered by white families in the 70's and reveals the impact of their upbringing.

### 3. DfE Update

- 3.1 HW joined the meeting to provide an update on current fostering work within the Department for Education (DfE).
- 3.2 *Recruitment and Retention Hubs* - HW shared the [link](#) to the Foster with North East Support Hub, which launched last week as part of the wider retention and recruitment scheme. All foster carer enquiries within the North East will now be directed to one central hub. In addition, regions are receiving DfE funding to expand their Mockingbird programmes. Selected regions will also receive funding and support with a communications campaign. Mockingbird is the primary area where retention funds will be directed.
- 3.3 *Fostering Advisory Board* – The first meeting of the DfE Fostering Advisory Board should be taking place next month, with quarterly meetings to follow. A number of organisations including CoramBAAF, The Fostering Network and Ofsted will be represented on the board. DfE are also looking to include foster carers and care experienced people within the board's membership. The focus of the board will be on policy rather than delivery, with delegated authority set to be prioritised early on in discussions. The 'Quick Wins' suggested by this committee (see 4.1) will be included in conversations. Issues such as finance and allegation processes will be linked in with the Standards of Care review - a multi-year project looking at the development of new standards across all homes for looked after children and young people.

**Action: HAN to share retention ideas with HW**

### 4. DfE 'Quick Wins'

- 4.1 Last meeting, DfE asked the committee to think of some 'quick wins': small, simple changes that could be made to the Fostering National Minimum Standards that wouldn't require a substantial overhaul of the system. CoramBAAF collated and categorised members' suggestions into one document for DfE to view.
- 4.2 CJ took members through the document and invited any comments.

4.3 Members acknowledged many foster carers are wary of engaging with staying put arrangements, due to them not being fit for purpose. Payments stop suddenly when children turn 18 and carers are caught unawares. They are left unable to financially support their young people, whose needs have not changed, resulting in them potentially having to end the placement.

4.4 Members discussed the 'quick wins' with HW and clarified certain points. Topics addressed included:

- Exemptions for families looking to foster more than 3 children who aren't siblings.
- Difficulties and inconsistencies involved with local authorities placing children in neighbouring local authorities as opposed to with IFAs.
- Examples of blockers to the allegations process.
- Examples of blockers to the delegated authority process.

***Action: JAB to share redacted delegated authority form with HW***

***Action: EF and HW to communicate re. separate meeting on allegations***

***Action: HW to email EF about other 'quick wins' queries. HW to be invited to a future meeting where members can submit questions in advance.***

***Date of next meeting: 24 January 2024***