

Children's Social Care Review Submission BMEPAC, March 2021

The [Black Minority Ethnic Perspectives Advisory Committee](#) (BMEPAC) advises and informs CoramBAAF on matters concerning black and minority ethnic children and families and the promotion of anti-racist practice. This longstanding forum consists of social workers, professionals from the health sector as well as those who have an understanding of special guardianship, kinship care, residential care and youth justice. Several of our members have lived experiences of services.

BMEPAC is inspired by an African proverb, '*if you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together*'. We hope that this review of children's social care will *go far*, by encouraging inclusion and collaboration. We recommend the Review considers the following:

Intersectional approaches

Intersectionality fosters an understanding of the different ways in which race, gender, age, sexuality, ability, and class intersect to shape everyday experiences. These interactive dynamics shape lives. We encourage the Review to take an intersectional approach to consider how diversity, social inequality and poverty impact the lived experiences of children. The review must take account of the disadvantage implications of all protected characteristics on parents and adults as well as children in families, including the central importance of women's rights and experiences of oppression.

Data

The Review must focus on improving data collection on racial inequality at governmental and local level. The ongoing lack of research and policy attention to the substantial ethnic inequalities in child welfare and child protection is not acceptable. We believe it represents a scandalous missed opportunity to learn about protective factors in our children's lives and how to genuinely improve outcomes.

Community engagement

BMEPAC believes that engaging with communities is vital. We must value the contribution of black and minority ethnic families and their willingness to care for children from their community. A deficit-based approach undervalues and undermines the attributes, resources and assets that black and minority ethnic families have. A focus on listening and engaging with black lives and experiences including experiences of racism is fundamental to the progression of anti-racist practice.

Culturally informed policy and law

In 2014, the government removed from the Adoption and Children Act (2002) in England, the requirement that in placing a child for adoption, the adoption agency must give due consideration to the child's religious persuasion, racial origin, culture

and language. This was wrong and culturally insensitive. We urge the Review to consider reinstating this provision.

Strengthening foster care

BMEPAC believes that strengthening the foster care system will deliver significant benefits for black and minority ethnic children. We want to draw attention to the Mockingbird extended family fostering model as a promising system of care that allows carers and young people to develop strong support systems.

Racism and Mental Health

There is an urgent need to consider and mitigate the impact of racism on mental wellbeing. BMEPAC is particularly concerned for unaccompanied asylum seeking (UASC) children and young people. Tending to these children's complex emotional well-being and mental health needs takes considerable skill, knowledge, training and access to resources.