



THE *Black* CARE EXPERIENCE

The Black Care Experience

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Who volunteered their time and effort for this Cause
from November 2020 – October 2021
and continue to support the mission of
The Black Care Experience

A Special Thank You to:

The Participants of Our Survey

Further information about The Black Care Experience can be found at
<https://theblackcareexperience.wordpress.com/>

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Introduction

The Black Care Experience Team came together as a result of a shared concern about the 'Care' and 'Outcomes' of those who are Black and In Care. We also came together, with a shared concern as to how the 'Voices' of those who are Black and in Care will be presented and represented at England's Children's' Social Care Review, and saw the need to be a 'Voice' to help shape the 'Care' of the next Black Care Experienced Generation.

Now we understand that the Care Experience for ALL does come with its challenges, however we also know that the Care Experience for those of us who are Black, come with an extra set of challenges.

Black being defined as a person whose Ethnic Origin is either African, Caribbean including Mixed Race with African or Caribbean Heritage

In pursuit of our mission, from November 2020 – December 2020, we launched Our Survey, with the aim of gathering the experiences of Black Care Experienced (in Care and Care Leavers) of ALL age groups, in order to document ALL of our experiences, in a Report filled with evidence, solutions and recommendations, and deliver this to the Chair of England's Care Review.

Our Survey had a specific focus to gather the impact and outcomes of those of us placed with a Foster Family, in a Residential Children's Care Home and in a Community, we could not or cannot culturally identify with; along with capturing the impact and outcomes of those of us who were placed with a Foster Family, in a Residential Care Home and in a Community, we could or can culturally identified with.

As we collated our findings, we began to understand more about the Black Care Experienced journey dating back to the 1950's, and we were surprised to understand that this was not the first time, the concerns of those 'Black and In Care' had been raised with our Government.

OUR HISTORY MATTERS

Farming

Between the **1950's** to the **1980's**, Nigerian children were fostered out by their parents to white working-class families in the UK. Here, the Nigerian Parents would pay these families to take care of their children. This was an informal system, a practice of private fostering and adoption known as 'Farming'.

The guidelines for private Foster Carers, included a responsibility to notify Social Services of impending arrivals and departures. But many Foster Carers did not want to disclose that they were earning an income, however small; and over-stretched social services departments rarely had time to ensure the guidelines were being followed.

At the end of 1998, the African Advisory Service (which is now disbanded) estimated that there were up to 9,000¹ West African children privately fostered in the UK.

Being placed with families they could not culturally identify with, impacted on how these children saw themselves in relation to their own cultural identity and ethnicity.

In 1967 **Adewale Akinnuoye – Agbaje** was 'Farmed' to a white working-class family in Tilbury, and tells his Story through his film '**Farming**', which can be found on Amazon Prime Video.

Talking from his own Care Experience in an interview with the Guardian² in 2012, Actor and Film Director, Adewale Akinnuoye – Agbaje stated *"...if one is from a certain culture and then fosters someone from another culture, one should really take the time to learn about that other culture because there will come a point when the child will need to know about from whence it came"*.

In the BuzzFeed³ News October 2019 article *"5 People shared with us how being "Farmed" to white families impacted on their lives and how they see race"*, Reporter **Ade Onibada**, captures the experiences of **Derek Owusu, Mojo, Nels Abbey, Gina Knight** and **David Gorgeous**.

Whilst each one remains endearing to the ones who raised them, the different accounts of how their Care Experienced journey impacted on their Identity, is one to take note of.

From **Derek Owusu** we learn:

The "massive culture shock" of inner-city London life continued at primary school when all of a sudden a new identity was thrust upon him. "People were telling me that I'm an African, and I'm like, what the heck is an African?" said Owusu.

"I didn't know what it was until I started seeing the adverts on TV with famine, emaciated children, all that kind of stuff. Obviously I was like, that's embarrassing. It became an insult in school if someone asked you 'Are you African?' You'd get offended," he said.

Owusu said he is starting to better understand how his unconventional start in life still affects him.

When asked how he felt being privately fostered and then returning to his birth mother, he replied, "It ruined my life", before quickly backtracking. "I'm exaggerating. It hasn't ruined my life, but it's directly linked to my diagnosis. I have borderline personality disorder."

"BPD affects everything," explained Owusu. "It affects my relationships with people, friends, romantic, my sense of identity, all of these things. It just confuses everything. I can't regulate my emotions, so it's had a very negative effect on my life. I think the first part of healing was finding out what I had, so I've probably had this disorder since I was about 12 years old and been depressed since I was 12 years old."

In a world of hypotheticals and what-ifs, the idea of being raised in a healthy black household for those early years of his life isn't something he'd ever fully considered until this interview.

When presented with the thought of it, he is able to imagine how, at the very least, his hair and skin would have benefited. "The comb that they used to comb my hair — it wasn't even an afro comb," he said. "I don't even know what it is, but I would have sores on my head and my skin. I don't ever remember it being creamed."

Beyond the surface, however, he said the biggest impact could have been to his self-esteem: "I think my self-esteem may have been built up if I was around a black family, especially if we were a black family in that white area, because then I know they would [have] put more emphasis on me to believe in myself, [to not] let people talk down to [me] — just to make sure that I was prepared for the world outside."

Even with all the love poured into him by his foster parents tucked away in idyllic Long Melford, he admitted they failed to equip him with the tools needed to navigate society as a young black man. "That's one thing my foster mother didn't do. She didn't prepare me for the world, for the racism. I never heard the word 'racism' or the word 'racist' in our house," he said. "I didn't know what those things were until I was in year 6. I think all of it could have made a big difference."

From Mojo we learn:

After a failed attempt to place her with a Nigerian family in east London at 3 months old, Mojo was relocated to rural Lincolnshire in the north of England, under the care of a foster parent she refers to as her grandmother.

"My foster grandma states that she fell in love with me from the moment she had me in her arms," she said. Her memories from that time are pieced together with notes from personal health records and what her grandmother has relayed to her.

Mojo speaks passionately about her grandmother who she remains in contact with. "She's the absolute love of my life," she said. She is my hope in a very dark and lonely world. Her voice brightens my day. I love her because she's taught me how to love freely, and I think that's what I'm able to pour from. Because I've seen it given freely, I will always give back."

Even with all the admiration, there are certain realities of her childhood that Mojo refuses to repress. "Grandma gave me a good experience, but it was never what I needed," she said. "Because I love her, I don't want to disrespect her at all.

"It was not meant to be her. It should have been my mum. Everyone gets picked up from school by their mum. I get picked up by someone who doesn't even fucking look like me, and so it will always fall short. And that's so hard to say because I am so majestically grateful. There's so much beauty in the story, but when I look back I was confused. I felt like I pretended so well. My personality worked against me. I'm so good at pretending and knowing how to smile that you don't actually see ... this is awful."

Mojo said she was bullied as a child, leading to a severe identity crisis as she tried to make sense of her differences in a largely white town and within the household bustling with children who didn't resemble her.

She said: "I always questioned my skin colour and so did people in school.

Mojo elaborated, explaining that when she had been racially abused, her foster mother would say things like "I've always thought your skin was beautiful, sweetheart, just ignore them."

She felt that wasn't enough to help deal with a child's self-confidence. "That doesn't do shit. That doesn't do anything for you," she said. "I hated my life and I despised it for a very long time, and I'm still trying to understand it now."

It was during her 12th year that her life would take the dramatic turn that she called "horrendous". During a Christmas visit to her mother's home in south London, it was decided that she would be staying indefinitely.

Mojo's struggles with her racial identity were not alleviated by her move to south London. Instead, the crisis deepened, and her confusion was quickly replaced with hatred. "Based on what the media had shown me and my experience of black people, I hated them. I really did."

"In psychodynamic psychotherapy, it's very intense. It's linking everything back to my childhood. It's very hard. Because as a performer of happiness, I don't realise how damaged I am sometimes and how vulnerable I am and what's still quite perverse and distorted in my mind because of my trauma."

From **Nels Abbey** we learn:

Nels Abbey was in foster care "practically from birth", he told BuzzFeed News. Moving between three English towns, he eventually spent his early years in Derby. And what may have appeared unconventional to others was, for him, entirely normal.

"For a long time, I didn't think there was anything strange about me having white parents. It was perfectly normal. Thinking back to that time, it was just the way it was," Abbey said. "The same way in which anybody would view their parents is how you would view your

foster parents when you're born into it. Those are your parents. Mum and dad — for me as I knew them at the time — were a German lady and a white man of Scottish descent. They provided us a good life with stability and a happy home."

As an adult, Abbey would grow to better understand the significance of his foster mother's German heritage and how it enabled her to articulate racism to him in response to his treatment at school which often left him punished more harshly than his white counterparts.

"I was born in the '80s, so 1945 was just 40 years earlier, which might seem like a long time but it's really not. She was alive during the war era. She was young but she was very aware of what was going on. So the learnings of the post-war — particularly for the German population, where they had to confront this notion of what racism is and the impact it has — was clearly something she knew of."

More than 100 miles away in west London, Abbey's birth mother was making plans to bring together her children under one household. In one summer, his world as he knew it would be dismantled.

*Life in west London would come as "a big culture shock," for the newly relocated Abbey, who had become a full-fledged member of the club of then-beloved children's presenter Rolf Harris, who hosted the show *Rolf's Cartoon Club*. (Harris was convicted in 2014 of sexually assaulting four underage girls.)*

*"Week one, it was all good. Everyone took a liking to me, and we were all cool. So week two, I thought I'd up the ante and see what these guys were into, and I made the stupid mistake of wearing my *Rolf's Cartoon Club* badge to school. I didn't know how unhip that was, and everyone started ripping into me. And I realised that London was not this centre of innocence that the countryside was."*

Similarly, Abbey came to realise how his Nigerian heritage further tanked his social capital in the playground and forced him to take extreme measures as an act of self-preservation.

*He said: "Me and my *Rolf Harris* badge and my Nigerian heritage quickly became sources of ridicule. Luckily I had an Anglo-sounding surname, so I quickly lied and went into the closet. I said that I was from Barbados or something, and everyone believed me. And I stayed in that closet for a few years."*

Abbey would spend a further two years in west London before another dramatic change meant he spent most of his teenage years at a boarding school in Nigeria, where he received a baptism of African culture by full immersion.

The proud British Nigerian spoke with gratitude for the different cultural lanes he's lived in. He credited both sets of parents for instilling a strong sense of values and moral good.

"The life that I have lived with foster care, with my mum, with my dad, with boarding school and everything else," he said. "I cannot think of a different life, because that was my normality."

“Don’t get me wrong, when I speak to other people it’s now that I realise how crazily abnormal that was. The foster care process, I am a product of that environment. That environment helped shaped me into who I am today, and I’m very grateful to my foster mum and dad and of course my parents too.”

From **Gina Knight** we learn:

Knight was raised in multicultural southeast London, an important detail that offered her a strong sense of identity even in the midst of an unorthodox home life. While she was the “odd one out” inside her white foster family, the community she lived and socialised in reflected her cultural identity.

“I was always very aware of being different,” she recalled. “A lot of people ask, ‘When did you realise that they weren’t your parents?’ There was never any doubt, for obvious reasons, and also I always felt like I wasn’t really their child, I was just sort of like...an extended house guest for a really long time.”

Knight did experience some frustration of being raised in a household where the only person who appeared to validate her difference was herself. “I just don’t think that a lot of these working-class people had the capacity to articulate what we would go through as black children being raised by white people,” she said. “It’s just not something they could fathom in their head.”

She went on: “There was no differentiation. The differences were obviously there, but there was no kind of acknowledgement of those differences. In turn, you don’t really know how to navigate the feelings that you’re having because they’re not being acknowledged by the people around you.”

As a result, Knight said, the complexity of her living arrangement meant she did struggle at times to really connect with both her black and white friends. “In essence you are transracial, and I hate that word, but it’s a very difficult space, and I don’t think at that time there was enough knowledge,” she said.

She is critical of an entire system that left her with little say in how she would be raised and even less support about how best it could be done. “Those social workers should have done more to prepare [the foster parents] for what I would go through growing up and how I would feel and ways in which to help me navigate that, and I don’t think that was done at all,” she said. “Especially not back then. That’s just not something that was discussed.

“I don’t think they were pulled aside and asked, ‘Do you understand what you’re sort of going to be doing going forward? That you’re going to be looking after someone who is not the same race as you. Do you know what kind of impact that’s going to have on that child’s life?’ I don’t think those conversations were ever had.”

Today, Knight admits that she still sometimes feels “out of place”. But through her skills as a hairstylist, she has been able to grow and nurture relationships with other black women. “I’d never really connected with anyone, so for me it was all about hair. And that was the

only way that I could find to talk to other black women and form friendships," she said. She now runs an award-winning wig business.

Knight, a mother of two, is fiercely protective of her own little family and is a staunch believer that when it comes to caring for children of other ethnicities, there is no room for so-called colour-blind politics.

She urges prospective parents for black children to "make sure that they're doing it for the right reasons".

"I think that if you're not 100% committed to antiracism, then you have no place to really be adopting outside of your race, or even adopting at all — because you should be antiracist," she said. "If you think that all a child needs is love, and that's it, that they don't need any sort of other tools to be able to function in life, you're probably wrong."

For Knight, the worst thing a parent can do is to say that they "don't see colour".

"That's bullshit, and it's actually detrimental to that child's wellbeing that you don't see their race — because that means you don't see them," she said. "I think you just have to be aware of race and not try and brush it under the carpet and try to be in this little colour-blind bubble ... because this utopian world just doesn't exist."

From David Gorgeous we learn:

If you ask David Gorgeous, he will tell you that he had three mothers.

"It was quite funny to feel like any mum that I showed more love to, I would be hurting the other mothers," he told BuzzFeed News. "It's just that I love them differently because they're different people. What I can speak to one foster mum about is different to how I would approach my biological mum. I wouldn't tell my biological mum everything, but I would mostly tell my foster mum everything because the way she receives information is made different."

Gorgeous, as one of the thousands of West African children farmed out to white working-class families, characterised the three matriarchs and three very different households from his childhood.

"I moved from the first home which was free and open, to the second home which was a bit more disciplined and more about education, to my Nigerian home, where it's 'Don't talk unless you're spoken to, be respectful, and listen to your parents'," he said.

Appeasing the adults in his life and the weight of loyalty would create a splintering effect which the 39-year-old experiences even to this day.

He said: "I had to learn how to be totally different people. Even now when I go back to see my foster mum, ex-partners have said to me that they can see a total difference."

His story of being farmed begins in early 1980s Brighton with a couple who had no children of their own but had opened their home to other black children before fostering him. While he can speak at great length about the open and progressive environment they created, it was in that household where he was sexually abused by a family friend.

At the age of 6, he was relocated to a second home in Brighton to join his biological brother; however, a stark difference left him unable to adjust and longing for his previous family. "They were lovely, but I just didn't settle there," he said. "It was mainly because I was so used to my foster mum.

When it came to identity, for Gorgeous, coming into manhood took precedence over any other descriptor; for his blueprint, he looked to his first foster father. "I was taught to be a man first before being black, white, or anything else," he recalled. "When my foster father would dress up in a suit, I would dress up in a suit, like at special occasions. He was teaching me how to be a boy first and then a man, rather than differentiating by colour."

It was his first foster mother who first spoke to him about race.

"As a child, I didn't identify with black or white, but my foster mum was very clear: I was her little black boy, so she was very much establishing me as a black boy," he said.

And nothing punctuated his blackness more so than the outside world. Gorgeous recalled his time in primary school, where he would be called every name but the one his parents actually gave him.

"I would always hear 'nig nog', 'golliwog', the n-word. I didn't know what those names meant. I didn't know why I was being called those names, and for some reason 'golliwog' really upset me. I don't know why, but it really did. They were calling me a name which wasn't my name, and they were being mean, even down to adults calling me 'golliwog'."

His foster mother's response was to reassure him and attempt to translate the way in which racism operated: "She tried to put me at ease as much as she could and tried to make sure that I felt comfortable in my own skin. She made me aware that we are different colours and some people aren't so welcoming to different people of different colours. So she tried to put it in as simple terms as possible for me."

In contrast to his first foster mother, his Nigerian mother, whom he described as "strong" and "bold", kept in regular contact and routinely took sons for the summer holidays. For that, Gorgeous considers himself fortunate. "She very much stayed involved. We weren't just left by her," he said.

By the time Gorgeous was 9, his fostering experience would come to an end. He went from Brighton to Brixton, in south London, within walking distance of the now-iconic Windrush Square. "I went from being surrounded by white people — the only black in the village — to being literally surrounded by black people. In school, understanding there was Nigerians, Ghanaians, Jamaicans — and everyone wanted to be West Indian at that time as well. So it was a culture shock and a half because I was a very British child. I wasn't used to that."

The adjustment would be better described as a free fall, with very little explanation or support for the transition — all aspects that Gorgeous believes are “harmful”.

“You're not explaining to [children that] they're just moving from home to home. There was no social workers involved. There was no psychological support. It was just literally move, move, now you're back with your Nigerian family you should be a Nigerian boy.”

By the age of 13, Gorgeous found himself embarking on another journey. On a family holiday to Nigeria, he suddenly found himself being fitted for a school uniform. “The day that me and my mum were supposed to come back to London was the day they dropped me and my brother off for boarding school,” he said.

Despite his protests, he spent two years at the school becoming familiar with his Nigerian heritage.

Gorgeous now sits on a panel for foster children, where he hopes that his experience outside the formal system can be used to improve the experience of England's thousands of children in need of homes.

Regarding his experience of being raised in a white household, Gorgeous has no immediate objections to transracial fostering, but he is mindful of what is at stake. “I wanted to give back and do something, and this comes across so much in terms of matching the keywords,” he said, “so you have to try and match a child with familiar cultures, religion, race.

“Sometimes a child just needs a home, and this is how I believed for many years, but being on the fostering panel is like feeling that sometimes if you don't match correctly it can go so wrong.”

Reflecting on his life's trajectory as charted by his mother's choice, Gorgeous reserves judgment and instead poses a hypothetical question: “What could I have expected her to do? She chose the best decision she could based on her circumstances. At the same time, there's always going to be scars and things that happened that we've had to overcome from those foster homes.”

The Voices of those who were Farmed are only now being Heard.

Black and In Care Steering Group

In the early **1980's** it is said that two separate surveys, carried out in London and Manchester, showed for the first time that children and young people from African and Caribbean backgrounds were significantly overrepresented in care, and children of mixed parentage. To add further context, there were debates surrounding racism in society causing **The Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professionals (ABSWAP)** to raise their concern for the position of black children in care.

In **1983** ABSWAP's evidence to **House of Commons Select Committee – Children In Care** stated *“The most valuable resource of any ethnic group is its children. Nevertheless, black children are being taken from black families by the process of law and being placed with white families. It is in essence ‘internal colonialism’ and a new form of the slave trade, but only black children are being used.”* ABSWAP viewed the practice of trans-racial placements as *“a microcosm of the oppression of black people in society’ and saw the failure to collect official data on ethnicity as a ‘conspiracy to silence”.*

The **Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)** in their evidence to the Committee suggested: *“Black families have imposed on them Eurocentric assumptions of good parenting and proper family life which are used to justify separating parents from children”.*

The CRE went on to:

- Highlight the failure of social services departments to recruit enough Black Foster Carers and Adoptive Parents, resulting in Black Children being overrepresented in children's homes
- Express their concerns that when Black Children are Fostered with white families, this could lead to identity problems, a poor self-image, lack of cultural knowledge, few Black friends and a stereotyped white view of young Black people

In **1984** a **Black and In Care Conference** was held in at Kingsway Princeton College in London, in order to hear the voices of those Black and In Care. The Conference was put together by a **Black and In Care Steering Group (BIC)**, the **National Association for Young People in Care (NAYPIC)** and the **Children's Legal Centre** and was attended by about 300 people. 180 young Black people in Care and ex-Care and 120 Black Social Workers and Community Workers.

BIC felt strongly that the Conference was for young Black people in Care and Ex-Care and some Black Social Workers, and not for young White People or White Social Workers. It was felt that Black people would feel prohibited from expressing their views fully in front of white people and especially White Social Workers. BIC shared that they received *“a lot of stick from the press about the issue – we were called Black racists, Black activists’ guerrillas and Trotskyites. We got several complaints from White Social Workers about the fact that they were excluded from the conference. We had to explain to them that this decision had been made by young Black people in Care*

and Ex-Care themselves, many of whom had suffered because of the racist attitudes of White Social Workers”.

The Conference workshops highlighted issues surrounding the Care of those who are Black, in relation to their:

- Culture, Health, Hair and Skin Care
- How they were matched and looked after in Foster Care and Residential Care
- How those from Mixed Parentage were identified
- The lack of support to help them transition on when Leaving Care and highlighted
- Racism in the Care System.

Recommendations were made for changes to Policy and Practice, resulting in a **Black and In Care Conference Report** being prepared and published in May 1985 and widely circulated to Local Authorities ([this we hope to find and have access to](#)). It is said that this revealed a ‘white care’ that failed to recognise many of the needs of young people who were ‘black and in care’ at that time.

The recommendations can be found in **Care Less Lives, The Story of the Rights Movement of Young People in Care** written by **Mike Stein** and are as follows:

Culture, Health, Hair and Skin Care

“We heard a lot of young black people in Care, complaining that they were not getting the right type of skin and hair creams (if any) whilst in Care. Other people complained that our hair was often cut very short as soon as they got into Care, because the white workers did not know how to handle it. There were others who said that they were not given any information about sickle cell anaemia and other aspects of health that have particular relevance to black people. So this is why this topic is chosen”.

“All children are treated the same in care. That is, we all have the white image projected on us. This means that if you are black or non-white you don’t really fit in. The children in care are brought up in an environment in which black food is alien. They are thought of as abnormal if they ask for hair oil etc, because white children don’t have the same type of hair as the majority of black people. The social workers and foster parents didn’t seem to understand that the majority of black kids suffer from dry skin and therefore need a good moisturising cream”.

Recommendations

1. The black child needs to be put in an area where there are some black people or other black families, who they can identify with
2. Black workers should be encouraged to be employed in social services and in homes, because they give the kids a much-needed link with their culture
3. Black children from the same family should be kept together

4. The staff should be educated about sickle cell anaemia, and they should try to ensure that all black kids are screened for it to ensure that they can be treated appropriately
5. The child should be encouraged to find out things about his/her culture and the staff should be able to show them the positive sides of their culture
6. The children should be encouraged to eat all different types of food from different cultures – a menu with West Indian or Asian food appearing at least once within the week
7. The staff should be educated in how to look after hair and skin of children from different cultures to ensure that the correct hair and skin creams are given
8. Foster parents should be examined to ensure that they are aware of these issues and are doing something positive about them.

Fostering

“Up until recently, most young black people have been fostered by white middle-class people and this has resulted in many of us having ‘identity problems’. We thought it was important to have a workshop on the whole question of fostering, including discussion on trans-racial placements and ‘hard to place’ teenagers”.

“We feel it is important that young black people should be aware of their culture and be prepared for the racism they were going to face in a community they may live in”.

Recommendations

1. Young black people should have a choice whether they were fostered with black or white foster parents
2. Black adults should be involved in the fostering and adoption process involving a black child
3. White people fostering young people should be educated about black children

Mixed Parentage

“It was obvious to us that in proportion to the population, there were too many young black people in care (in the inner-city areas, sometimes up to 60%) But out of this number a large percentage are of mixed parentage. These children were often called offensive names like ‘half-caste’ and ‘half-breed’ as well, therefore this topic was chosen to discuss the specific difficulties of such children and young people”.

It was also noted that some staff treated lighter skinned young people better than the darker skinned young people.

Recommendations

1. If you are of mixed parentage you should be called mixed parentage
2. Young people being fostered should have a choice whether they want to be fostered with white, black or mixed-race foster parents

Leaving Care

“We chose this topic because many young people do not have the opportunity to get to know the black community after having been isolated from it for so many years.”

Recommendations

1. Visits to be made by BIC to educate young black people about their lives, including culture, roots, healthcare and cooking
2. Black activities in children’s homes to help young black people relate to black people, such as books, posters and outings to black galleries
3. Black people to have the opportunity to get to know the Black community before leaving their children’s home

Racism in the Care System

“This workshop was vital because of the racism which exists in society as a whole which is reflected in the care system. Although racism would be mentioned in other workshops, it was felt necessary to have a separate workshop to discuss how it affected young people in care and also suggestions for change”.

Some young people shared that they had been called ‘black bastard’, others had experienced more subtle remarks at meal times or when programmes on Africa were on television. It was also felt that help and advice on culture was denied to young people and this made many reject their culture when leaving care, going into the black community.

The group shared that they had been taken out of the black community and sent to ‘white places’ and felt this was done deliberately.

One young person shared that he had to go to the library to learn what he could (about his culture) from books.

Another young person shared that when they tried to talk to a member of staff about his culture, he was told ‘you don’t need have to worry about that you’re in England now, you know, when in Rome’.

When racist comments were made to the young people, they felt useless, especially when senior staff did not take their complaints seriously.

Recommendations

1. Disciplinary action must be taken on those staff who make racist remarks or comments to young people
2. References to young people’s cultural backgrounds and history should be made available to young people in care
3. Funds should be made available for young people to visit the countries of their origins

4. Black people should be encouraged to work in the social services as residential and field social workers
5. Families must be kept together and should not be split up when going into care
6. The young people should not be 'shipped out' of the black community into rural areas where there is no black community

In addition to the Report, some of the 'Voices' and experiences of those Black and in Care were captured in a film called '**Black and In Care 1984**'⁴. As we know it, the 'Voices' heard are that of **Lemm Sissay, David Akinsanya, David Okoro, Sharon Kadifa, Margaret Parr, and Hetty, Barbara, and David** (their full names we do not know) along with **Jennifer Alert** and **Taiwo Emiabata** who have passed away. This was filmed by **Sean Geoghegan**, who helped develop NAYPIC.

BIC continued to meet each year, with other BIC groups set up in Liverpool in 1984, and in Manchester and Rochdale in 1986. BIC also held their second Black and In Care Conference in 1987, proving there to be a need for a forum for black care experienced young people to express themselves.

BIC worked closely with NAYPIC, who were seen by the Black and in Care as the organisation to bring about change for all young people in care, including black young people, as before the 1980's very little attention had been paid in research, policy and practice to the experiences of those black and in care.

The Black and In Care Conference Report was distributed to Local Authorities, along with NAYPIC presenting evidence on all aspects of Care in **1983/84**, to the House of Commons Select Committee on Social Services. The Committees' response in their Report led to the creation of the **Children Act 1989**.

Now the **ONLY** reference in the Act, relating to how Black Children should be Cared for is that Local Authorities are **to give consideration** to the "**religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background**" of the child to be placed.

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services outlines that Foster Carers "**should be informed, trained and confident about dealing with issues relating to gender, religion, ethnic origin, cultural background, linguistic background, nationality, disability or sexual orientation**", involving external professional advice and support as necessary. They also need to be able to "**balance the individual needs, wishes and preferences of the individual child with those of others in the household**".

Acknowledging The Children Act and the Guidance and Regulations that followed, along with reflecting on the stories of those who were Farmed, and the voices heard by way of the Black and In Care Steering Group, to taking into consideration the Small Axe British anthology Five Film series, created and directed by Steve McQueen telling the story of Care Experienced Alex Wheatle⁵, the Question we now consider is, are there still concerns as to how Black






Children and Young People have been or are being Cared for by England's Children's Social Care?

OUR SURVEY





From November 2020 – December 2020, The Black Care Experience launched Our Survey, with the aim of gathering the experiences of Black Care Experienced (in Care and Care Leavers) of ALL age groups, with particular focus on those placed with a Foster Family, in a Residential Children’s Care Home and in a Community, we could not or cannot culturally identify with; along with capturing the impact and outcomes of those of us who were placed with a Foster Family, in a Residential Care Home and in a Community, we could or can culturally identified with. With that in mind, please note that The Black Care Experience do not claim to speak on behalf of every Black Care Experience.

Our Survey was anonymously completed by 49 Participants




The Results | Our Voices

How old are you?					
				Response Percent	Response Total
1	8 – 11			2.04%	1
2	12 – 16			2.04%	1
3	16 – 25			34.69%	17
4	26 – 35			22.45%	11
5	36 – 45			8.16%	4
6	46 – 55			22.45%	11
7	56 – 65			8.16%	4
8	66 and over			0.00%	0
9	Prefer not to say			0.00%	0
				answered	49


What is your Ethnic Origin?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Black, Black British, African or Caribbean		75.51%	37
2	Mixed Heritage (includes for example White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African)		16.33%	8
3	Prefer not to say		2.04%	1
4	Please state your preferred description of your Ethnic Origin here:		6.12%	3
			answered	49


What Gender do you identify as?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Male		26.53%	13
2	Female		71.43%	35
3	Prefer not to say		2.04%	1
4	Other (please specify):		0.00%	0
			answered	49




Which of the following best describes your Sexual Orientation?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Straight, Heterosexual		83.67%	41
2	Gay or Lesbian		2.04%	1
3	Bisexual		8.16%	4



Which of the following best describes your Sexual Orientation?

			Response Percent	Response Total
4	Prefer not to say		6.12%	3
5	Other (please specify):		0.00%	0
			answered	49



The views of the Black Care Experienced must be heard at England's Care Review

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		89.8%	44
2	Agree		8.2%	4
3	Neither agree nor disagree		2.0%	1
4	Disagree		0.0%	0
5	Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
			answered	49

It is important for the Black Care Experienced to be represented in the leadership of England's Care Review

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		85.7%	42
2	Agree		14.3%	7
3	Neither agree nor disagree		0.0%	0
4	Disagree		0.0%	0
5	Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
			answered	49

The Black Care Experienced must be involved in all stages of England's Care Review?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		87.8%	43
2	Agree		10.2%	5

The Black Care Experienced must be involved in all stages of England's Care Review?			Response Percent	Response Total
3	Neither agree nor disagree	1	2.0%	1
4	Disagree	0	0.0%	0
5	Strongly disagree	0	0.0%	0
			answered	49




Which statement(s) best describes your Care Experience. (If you have experience of being placed in both Foster Care and Residential Care, please answer 'Yes' to both statements)			
	Yes	Not Applicable	Response Total
I am In Care and I live with a Foster Family	14.3% (7)	85.7% (42)	49
I am in Care and I live in a Residential Care Home	4.1% (2)	95.9% (47)	49
I am a Care Leaver and I lived with a Foster Family	63.3% (31)	36.7% (18)	49
I am a Care Leaver and I lived in a Residential Care Home	22.4% (11)	77.6% (38)	49
		answered	49







With regards to your Identity, Culture, Hair Care and Skin Care, which statement is applicable to you?







My Foster Carers understood/understand my Identity and Culture			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		22.4%	11
2	Agree		18.4%	9
3	Neither agree nor disagree		18.4%	9
4	Disagree		14.3%	7
5	Strongly disagree		18.4%	9
6	Not Applicable		8.2%	4
			answered	49




The Residential Care Home Staff understood/understand my Identity and Culture			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		2.0%	1
2	Agree		4.1%	2
3	Neither agree nor disagree		4.1%	2
4	Disagree		8.2%	4
5	Strongly disagree		14.3%	7
6	Not Applicable		67.3%	33
			answered	49

My Social Worker understood/understands my Identity and Culture			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		14.3%	7
2	Agree		8.2%	4
3	Neither agree nor disagree		16.3%	8

My Social Worker understood/understands my Identity and Culture			Response Percent	Response Total
4	Disagree		22.4%	11
5	Strongly disagree		30.6%	15
6	Not Applicable		8.2%	4
			answered	49

My Foster Carers understood/understand my Hair Care and Skin Care			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		20.4%	10
2	Agree		20.4%	10
3	Neither agree nor disagree		6.1%	3
4	Disagree		12.2%	6
5	Strongly disagree		30.6%	15
6	Not Applicable		10.2%	5
			answered	49

The Residential Care Home Staff understood/understand my Hair Care and Skin Care			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		2.0%	1
2	Agree		4.1%	2
3	Neither agree nor disagree		4.1%	2
4	Disagree		4.1%	2
5	Strongly disagree		20.4%	10
6	Not Applicable		65.3%	32
			answered	49

My Social Worker understood/understands my Hair Care and Skin Care			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		12.2%	6
2	Agree		8.2%	4
3	Neither agree nor disagree		16.3%	8
4	Disagree		14.3%	7
5	Strongly disagree		40.8%	20
6	Not Applicable		8.2%	4
			answered	49

24 of the Participants felt able to share details of their experiences in this area as follows:

“The social workers, although some were black, did not take in the needs of my hair and skincare when I was placed in a foster home with white parents”.

“We were made to sit weekly to learn how to scrub ourselves clean using floor scrubbing brushes.

Those of us who had softer curls were made to brush it straight, and often our hair was kept short so that curls wouldn't form.

Skin care didn't occur until aged 15/15 (Parents of friends from schools gave products and explained importance), instead we would be paraded in public ...The phrase used was “” Their skins dried because of their colour””)

Our names (sometimes the whole name) were changed because it would identify us a foreign”.

“My birth mother tried to explain need for constant skin & hair hydration, proper combing/brushing/plaiting-I ended up having 'Grace Jones' hi-top due to lack of proper care-scalp burned by chemical straightening treatment at the age of 12yo”.

“I was placed with white foster carers & in residential homes all over the UK with white staff, there was no one who I could relate to & no one who could understand my cultural needs”.

“Placed from hospital with white British foster carers who had no knowledge or guidance of cultural identity, specifically skin & hair care. Placed for adoption to a white family, again no knowledge in how to promote my black British cultural identity (Jamaican heritage). Again, no knowledge of hair or skin care. Inability to prepare me gif the racism I would experience, including within my adoptive extended family”.

“I was brought up the majority of time by white foster carers who were overtly racist towards other ethnicities. They had a colour-blind attitude towards my own racial identity and showed no interest trying to support me to understand my racial heritage. No links with any black people growing up. First experience of talking and socialising with black people was at 16 years after living in white area /

going to a white school – I had to “learn” how to be black through my own research during my teens”.

“It was a problem at times but they did try their best. However, we had Caribbean staff occasionally work at my residential home and they looked after my hair too. My family would do my hair, so I had that support”.

“I was placed with a Pakistani family for a long time. They did not know anything about black culture. They were not interested in it and considered it to be “beneath them”. But they understood a little about black hair. I was lucky that their daughter was good with hair in general, and she was able to do black hair too. She used to cainrow my hair when I was young. They took me to a black hairdresser occasionally for a relaxer and their daughter learnt how to do this too. So she started relaxing my hair at home. But they never knew anything about the basics (moisture, covering hair at night, deep conditioner etc.)”.

“My foster carer was from the same country Ghana- so I learnt even more Twi and cultural practices. My social worker was Nigerian so the similar West African identity was there”.

“Hair and skincare was not talked about. I wish I was placed with a Black family who understood my needs. I was asked about culture in a curious polite way but nothing more. My placement was not appropriate and now I can reflect on it, it was abusive because I experienced neglect”.

“I was in kinship care when my mother died. My white grandmother and mixed arab uncle were my guardians. They didn’t fully understand my identity as black girl. Your questions don’t really capture my experience”.

“I was eventually fostered by a Caribbean family who had to sort out my hair as it was extremely matted”.

“When I first came into care my eczema flared up severely on my face. I wasn’t taken to the GP for a long period of time and could not get the cream I needed.

My foster carer relaxed my hair at age 11. Prior to that I did not have a relaxer”.

“I was placed with Jamaican Foster Carers and my Parents are Jamaican. I’m not sure if my Social Worker understood about my Hair Care and Skin Care”.

“My entire fostering team were white except one who only appeared during family visits even then never spoke about my needs”.

“My second Foster Carer she was white and she and she didn’t really understand how to look after my hair properly but she got some help from my social worker and our hairdressers”.

“My white foster carer cut off my hair as she wasn’t sure as to how to maintain it and that really left me distraught to some extent. I would always wear a hat and hated having to go into primary with my head shaved”.

“They’ve never showed an interest in this”.

“My Foster Carer was Black, same culture but still did not quite know what to do with my hair. In fact Lool it all broke off On special occasions she would take me to the Black hairdressers which was nice, but usually Lool my hair was eat out- a whole mess. So perhaps Afro-Caribbean Hair should be a course taught to all Foster carers regardless of race and Black children in care. But things like cream

for my skin she provided, she didn't have me looking all ashy lol.

My foster carer threw down in the kitchen- the food was goooood and familiar. She played Black music. And she and her family were black so was nice to see some representation. She took me to church which was predominantly Black people - so I could mix with children my age who were Black and other races.

So overall was a good experience in terms of culture and identity. Most outsiders did not even realise I was a foster child because both me and my foster carer were Black, so they assumed we were Blood relatives. I was placed in a Culturally suitable home, which has positively contributed to shaping my Black identity today. I'm sure I would have turned out different if I was placed with a different race foster carer or one who was ignorant, non-celebratory or discriminatory to my culture and identity".

"I was placed into care when I was 15 and my experience was terrible my first foster carer gave me things to lighten my skin as I was not considered beautiful enough I was too dark I had snake skin is what her and her partner referred to it as they would also kick me and my foster sister out to wonder and wouldn't give us money for food or in general so we were subjected to stealing etc and the multiple times I tried to run away social services would always bring me back, until finally I ran away to my mums house and they finally moved me to another placement this placement wasn't any better.

I moved in with Asians and they treated me like the help. I was told to clean everything and everywhere and I wouldn't complain I was made to feel bad about my identity and who I was as a person.

They emotionally abused me every day for 8 months I was only moved because I was told to record the things she would say to me as social services tend to not believe when a child cries out for help well at least for me so from that I was moved once again to the foster family I currently stay with now it's much better it's like the break I've been waiting for the things I went through with those two placements I was in will stay with me for life but I try to think about better things this was my experience living in care".

"Foster careers tried but residential care made no effort whatsoever".

"The social worker of me and my siblings were frequently, changing and were often of a different culture and did not understand when I was explaining my needs were not being met".

"I grew up in a Caribbean household despite both my parents being African. I believe I lost my identity and culture and I was forced to assimilate to the Caribbean culture which led to me having an identity crisis.

But my Foster Carer being black meant that she understood my needs such as having eczema and having to get my hair braided every month".

With regards to your Foster Carer, Residential Care Home Staff or Social Worker being TRAINED to understand your Identity, Culture, Hair Care and Skin Care, which statement is applicable to you?

It would have helped my Care Experience, if my Foster Carer had been trained to understand my Identity, Culture, Hair Care and Skin Care (CARE LEAVER)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		51.0%	25
2	Agree		16.3%	8
3	Neither agree nor disagree		10.2%	5
4	Disagree		4.1%	2
5	Strongly disagree		2.0%	1
6	Not Applicable		16.3%	8
			answered	49






It would have helped my Care Experience, if my Residential Care Home Staff had been trained to understand my Identity, Culture, Hair Care and Skin Care (CARE LEAVER)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		32.7%	16
2	Agree		8.2%	4
3	Neither agree nor disagree		2.0%	1
4	Disagree		2.0%	1
5	Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
6	Not Applicable		55.1%	27
			answered	49

It would have helped my Care Experience, if my Social Worker had been trained to understand my Identity, Culture, Hair Care and Skin Care (CARE LEAVER)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		61.2%	30
2	Agree		14.3%	7
3	Neither agree nor disagree		10.2%	5
4	Disagree		2.0%	1
5	Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
6	Not Applicable		12.2%	6
			answered	49

It would help my Care Experience, if my Foster Carer is trained to understand my Identity, Culture, Hair Care and Skin Care (IN CARE)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		34.7%	17
2	Agree		12.2%	6
3	Neither agree nor disagree		6.1%	3
4	Disagree		2.0%	1
5	Strongly disagree		2.0%	1
6	Not Applicable		42.9%	21
			answered	49

It would help my Care Experience, if my Residential Care Home Staff are trained to understand my Identity, Culture, Hair Care and Skin Care (IN CARE)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		22.4%	11
2	Agree		6.1%	3
3	Neither agree nor disagree		2.0%	1
4	Disagree		0.0%	0
5	Strongly disagree		0.0%	0
6	Not Applicable		69.4%	34

It would help my Care Experience, if my Residential Care Home Staff are trained to understand my Identity, Culture, Hair Care and Skin Care (IN CARE)			Response Percent	Response Total
			answered	49

It would help my Care Experience, if my Social Worker is trained to understand my Identity, Culture, Hair Care and Skin Care (IN CARE)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		38.8%	19
2	Agree		10.2%	5
3	Neither agree nor disagree		8.2%	4
4	Disagree		0.0%	0
5	Strongly disagree		2.0%	1
6	Not Applicable		40.8%	20
			answered	49

14 of the Participants felt able to share details of their experiences in this area as follows:

“If my social worker understood my identity, culture, hair, and skin care needs, they did not show it or think it was a necessary or an important aspect to my overall well-being. This should be considered a necessity when placing such children in care. This includes dietary requirements”

“My white foster mum, later my adoptive mum, braided my hair. She understood what it meant to have black children and that our hair and skin was different from hers. That it needed looking after differently from her own”.

“Unfortunately, I came from an era where those like me who were mixed were taught to be ashamed of our many shades and looks, and being a 'coloured' was the biggest of sins (Apparently that was mine/our fault too?)”.

“My Social Workers, foster carers & residential care home staff were all white & they did not possess any knowledge, awareness or understanding of my black identity & culture & of my cultural needs including hair & skin care”.

“Homemade Afro haircuts by an inexperienced foster career/ hairdresser! Do I need to say more - I was subjected to ridicule and bullying at high school - "umbrella head" "helmet head" Skin often dry & cracked as young child. Black identity never formed during those early childhood years and so I would psychologically function as a white child e.g. scared of black people”.

“I really do think that foster carers and social workers should be trained on different cultures and the needs that BAME children may have as a result. Training is not enough...I think they should be

obligated to ensure the child gets to engage with their culture too.

A lot of children are just forced to assimilate with the foster carers culture and ignore their own identity. I had to learn about my own hair from asking hairdressers questions. At the age of 26 I still feel a little bit lost and I'm learning from YouTube videos...but it's embarrassing when I'm around other black people and clearly know nothing about my own identity"

"All foster carers should know how to look after black hair".

"Training might have improved my experience but being trained doesn't mean they would respect what they were learning. Social workers should be trained. I am against trans-racial fostering because I do not believe a white family, no matter how good their intentions are, would ever meet my needs and make me feel at home".

"Within the children's home I always felt different, alone and a problem as I was the only black child. I no longer had the food I was used to and had no one there to do my hair"

"It would not have been necessary to train my residential care workers in any of these cultural issues if you employed residential care staff from my cultural background. I had 9 years in local authority care and only encountered 1 black staff member for a short time".

"I didn't notice as to whether my Social Worker understood about my Identity, Culture, Hair Care and Skin Care. I guess she thought all was well in that area because I was culturally matched"

"Foster carer was outstanding in all areas it was just one of my first social workers could do with more training".

"In reflection, I felt lucky that I had carers who were active to understanding these needs. And I was encouraged to meet with another African family and their son. This felt bait and 'uncool' as a swaggered out 13 year old but in light of looking back I appreciate these moments because they did try and go above and beyond in a place that felt very rare to see black people!"

"Yes! Because social services should be paying for my hair to get done every 4 weeks. As it got to a point that my Foster Career stopped paying for it and I had to pay for it myself".

With regards to being able to 'Voice' your 'Thoughts, Feelings and Wishes' about your Care, which statement is applicable to you?

I am able to share my 'thoughts, feelings and wishes' about my Care (IN CARE)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		6.1%	3
2	Agree		14.3%	7
3	Neither agree nor disagree		12.2%	6
4	Disagree		2.0%	1
5	Strongly disagree		16.3%	8
6	Not Applicable		49.0%	24
			answered	49

I was able to share my 'thoughts, feelings and wishes' about my Care (CARE LEAVER)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		14.3%	7
2	Agree		18.4%	9
3	Neither agree nor disagree		18.4%	9
4	Disagree		10.2%	5
5	Strongly disagree		26.5%	13
6	Not Applicable		12.2%	6
			answered	49

20 of the Participants felt able to share details of their experiences in this area as follows:

"Whilst in care, I felt I had to 'tow the line' and even racist remarks by other neighbours and children had to be endured in silence. I didn't think I had a way of venting my pain and suffering. My white foster parents didn't appear to care/understand what I was experiencing and at times I felt I was nothing more than a cash-cow. Since being a care-leaver, unless I'm able to speak to other care-leavers, I feel I'm not freely able to share my experience".

"I'm now able to talk about childhood and the impact growing up as a child of the state had on me.

Why I struggled to understand who I was and where I came from (When no one tells you, you are left to your own imagination, internalising the reasons why you're in the system based on the opinions of those who are supposed to be looking after you as well as Societal opinion in the day".

Discovery of self is an ongoing journey and these aspects of initial identity are the foundation anyone needs to grow from".

"Always told 'your mother wants you to stay with foster family', this was untrue; she felt that I had been 'kidnapped'. I felt unable to express my thoughts, feelings about being in care throughout my time (from 3yo-18yo)".

"My views, feelings & wishes were never listened to & I was always ignored & dismissed by Social Workers & Independent Reviewing Officers which made me very angry, upset & frustrated".

"I'm going back a long time so things were different then - a child's thoughts wishes and feelings didn't come into it - in 70's black children should be grateful that these lovely white foster carers were willing to look after them! - for example I never ever attended a CLA review meeting / SW's never spoke with me about identity other than 1 SW who attempted some life story work when I was 13 years of age. This didn't focus on racial identity though".

"I honestly felt like social workers just did not listen. As previously mentioned, I spent a significant amount of my time in care with a Pakistani family. Due to their cultural/religious beliefs I was not allowed to wear a skirt to school in the summer when it was hot. I raised this with my social worker at the time, and she agreed with the foster carer. The social worker's reasoning was that a 14/15 year old girl shouldn't really be wearing skirts".

"I was but I was scared that if I wasn't perfect then I'd be chucked out".

"I could always share but not listened to so I gave up in the end".

"My social worker never spoke to me. I was never asked my opinion. I was never asked about my needs".

"When I was first in care I was 6years old and found it difficult to express myself. Once I left care I felt very much on my own alone and invisible".

"There was no mechanism for me to voice concerns. My concerns were primarily about the people to whom I would have had the only recourse. Therefore I was complaining to the petiole I was complaining about. There was no external independent complaints mechanism and if there had been we would likely have had no access to it. I had 5 x 6 monthly case conferences which my social worker failed to attend. The only way she was able to identify me was from the case file. She was mu social worker for almost 3 years and she had no recollection of who I was".

"We covered up a lot of things that my foster carer was doing whilst in her care. It was not until I left her care that I was able to speak up more".

"I could tell my Social Worker anything and everything and she sensitively informed my Foster Carers".

"I was a child at the time, my voice wasn't taken much into consideration. I am trying now as a care leaver to actively use my voice to enforce change".

“I am able to voice my thoughts feelings and wishes but sometimes I think opinion does not count as the LA make the decisions. EG. For medical reasons”.

“I had to hide parts of myself while I was in foster care just out of survival and the fact me feeling weren't really all that important”.

“Sometimes I was able to share my thoughts and sometimes I couldn't. Hit or miss. I would say I didn't have much of an emotional bond with my foster carer, so talking about my feelings and wishes wasn't a thing”.

***“More so because I value self-expression and I've come out the other side of care and been successful.
In care, I pretty much wore my heart on my sleeve but I'm not sure if I would be social media vocal about it my care experience.***

I wouldn't want it to define my future at that age even if I understand now in some ways it has!

Mind you there was absolutely zero representation of black care leaver back then so that could of change my perception and possibly give me more confidence and aspiration as a young kid.

Especially if I could meet some as mentors' bases”.

“I didn't have safe space to discuss anything. I suffered in silence”.

With regards to your Mental Health and Emotional Well Being, which statement is applicable to you?

I received support for my mental health and emotional wellbeing (CARE LEAVER)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		6.1%	3
2	Agree		18.4%	9
3	Neither agree nor disagree		12.2%	6
4	Disagree		12.2%	6
5	Strongly disagree		38.8%	19
6	Not Applicable		12.2%	6
			answered	49

I am able to access support for my mental health and emotional wellbeing (IN CARE)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		2.0%	1
2	Agree		8.2%	4
3	Neither agree nor disagree		16.3%	8
4	Disagree		4.1%	2
5	Strongly disagree		12.2%	6
6	Not Applicable		57.1%	28
			answered	49

16 of the Participants felt able to share details of their experiences in this area as follows:

"I didn't automatically have support for my emotional and mental health well-being because I was placed in the care of my father soon after I left care but I know where to seek emotional and mental health support if needed, and this has come about through speaking to other care-leavers who are getting support. It's difficult because as a care leaver, you learn to suffer in silence because you've been used to suffering in silence during your time in care and so when you eventually leave care, the scars of silent suffering is still there and the mere fact that you were ever in care makes you feel as though nobody cares about your well-being no matter what you're going through - you learn not to burden people because you see yourself as a burden which is why you were placed in care - well, at

least that's how I feel".

"I have had no mental support while in care and it's something I should do as now and adult. It's just finding the time and money".

***"I had no one to talk to-barely saw social worker who worked predominantly with adults not children & young people. 'Life story' not compiled until 16yo & then not completed. No contact with family members despite that being my mother's wish.
No black/family history provided or emotionally supported.
No acknowledgement of racist attitudes or how to deal (neighbours petitioned for me not to be placed with foster family at 4yo due to risk of rising crime) -lived in predominantly white area-moved from home town-never to return".***

"I was never offered any help/support/counselling/therapy for my mental health/emotional wellbeing".

"I was a young person who internalised- so never had any professionals who were around long enough (other than a primary school headteacher) /or who had the professional curiosity to dig deeper to understand me. On the surface I looked like I was generally ok despite SW being well aware of some of the deficits in the foster care I was receiving".

"I was never offered any support for my emotional wellbeing in general. As an adult I have recently reflected back on my time in care, and who I am now as a person. I suffered a lot of trauma both in care, and prior to being in care, and it was never addressed. I now realise that all of my bad behaviour as a teenager was probably a cry for help. Social services were aware of this, and they were aware of all the trauma...yet it was never addressed. I was just ignored and written off as a naughty teenager. As an adult I am now planning to hopefully address the trauma myself through counselling".

"I was referred to CAMHS but I wasn't ready to open up. I also wish that I was supported by social services using trauma informed practice".

"It wasn't the right support though".

"I never received any support in or out of care regarding my mental health and emotional well-being. I know now that I suffered a lot of trauma. There was also mental illness in my family as my mother was severely schizophrenic.

I never really thought about not getting support until answering these questions I was in survival mode in and out of care".

"No one asked me if I was okay. They must have thought that I was, when in reality I was depressed and missing my Family and worried about my Brother who had been placed in another Foster Care Placement. I seemed ok, but acted out in School. It wasn't until I was in my late 20's that my mental health and emotional wellbeing took a nose dive. I was sectioned and engaged in therapy (CBT) for 12 months. This saved my life! If I had had the therapeutic input when initially placed in Care, maybe what happened in my late 20s could have been deterred. Just a thought!".

"When you first come into Care you don't get support about how you feel and when the decision was made for me to remain in Care there was no support. The support came after 3 placements".

"I feel like social services want to appear as if they care for the mental well-being of their young people but in actuality, they were never really all that invested".

"I suffered from depression getting help for it".

“I didn’t have a emotional bond with my foster carer. She provided a nice home, food, clothes etc - all the physical wellbeing was good. But In terms of emotional support that was not there, non-existent.

Although, my foster carer didn’t provide any emotional wellbeing, I did have a mentor at school who very much supported me a few times a week and also a child therapist I would go to visit during the week”.







“I had a mental breakdown before I went to uni. Had to drop out and got support. But felt more like 'quick fix' medicine rather than therapy, well-being resources and how to control how I react to triggers or finding out the causes of the problem.

Having a break year was probably want I needed anyway as I use to put a lot of pressure of self to succeed and live up to expectations.

Most fundamentally things I've learnt to cope welling being wise is self-initiated through to trying to understand family and young adolescence. But I guess I appreciated more in mid-20s”.

“Nope! No support was provided”.

My Care Experience has had a Positive Impact on how I view my Identity, Culture and Future as a Black person

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		16.33%	8
2	Agree		16.33%	8
3	Neither agree nor disagree		22.45%	11
4	Disagree		12.24%	6
5	Strongly disagree		30.61%	15
6	Not Applicable		2.04%	1
			answered	49

23 of the Participants felt able to share details of their experiences in this area as follows:

"I'm still trying to find my identity - I go from one extreme to the other"

"I know I'm black, I like being black and I've come to terms with being very different from lots of black people I know".

"I was gifted shame and blame for my heritage and circumstances. It wasn't until I was 14 that I was officially (though incorrectly told about my mix)..What it did give me for the first time was a sense of who I was. The angry boy started to be calmer as finally I knew something".

"Black history in school only related to slave trade. Own black culture mocked by foster family".

"My care experience was a negative & traumatic experience which has emotionally & mentally damaged me as there were no workers who i could relate to culturally".

"I lost myself".

"I do feel I have a positive sense of self now including my racial identity but care did nothing for me and could have been more psychologically damaging to me if I didn't have intrinsic traits such as emotional & academic intelligence to deal with the experience. I had to learn to be black myself which I think is totally unacceptable. I met my brother as an adult & he has had a similar experience of a white care system - I see a completely worrying effect for him".

"I never heard anything positive about my culture growing up in a Pakistani household. All I heard was stereotypes and ignorant offensive jokes".

"I learn to cook more Ghanaian dishes, learnt to understand and speak more Twi. Learnt more about customs and practices like weddings and attitudes to certain things. She actually took me to Ghana to see Elmina slave castle and to Canada for a wedding".

"I felt like I was pulled into this narrative of Black parents being violent. If I listened to my social workers, I'd believe Blackness was synonymous with violence".

"Because I had no input whilst in care. I found out for myself as a young adult. I was also lucky enough to go to Barbados with my foster family at 10 to connect with my born family".

"My care experience 1975-1982 was a living hell from start to finish and I still have nightmares about it in 2020".

"I think I've used the experience to make a positive impact on my identity and future".

"I lived within the Black Caribbean community and travelled several times to Jamaica with my Foster Carers. I am proud of my heritage and I am proud to be Black".

"I still struggle with my identity".

"My character is being built and I am now confidence and have become creative, able to express myself more and know who I am as a person and be myself".

"My care experience has left me with immense trauma scars of abandonment and rejection".

"My identity was never and will never be shaped by my experience as being a care leaver, it might have some influence but it didn't shape my identity as if I was to give it that much power or influence, I would have a negative view of myself as I truly felt that at times this system broke me".

"Being black and then being in care is like pulling out the worse hand in poker I'm lucky I'm a strong enough person or I'd probably broke by now".

"Yes definitely. Having a Black foster carer in London with the same Caribbean background has helped me with how I view my identity, culture and future.

I went into respite with a Black African family outside of London and my experience was even different then. So I'm sure children who are placed with non-Black families or different cultures have different experiences shaping them".

"Left me very confused and floundering".

"Sure could have been worst, glad social services took me away from racist private fostering carers.

Identity confidence got better as I got older / came back to London".

"No as I still suffer from an identity crisis".

If there is anything else you would like to say about your Care Experience?

For example: Did you/Do you feel loved by those who Cared/who Care for you? Did you feel/Do you feel like part of your Foster Family? Tell us one thing you want to change about your Care Experience? Please share in the space below.

"I felt loved by only one member of the family; the younger sister who seemed to be quite caring towards me.

I only felt as part of the family when they wanted to show me off and show how great and caring they were to have fostered a child, albeit a black child.

The one thing I would've changed about being in care is the need to have been with either a black family or a culturally aware and diverse white family. Or even if I had to be with a white family, it may have been a lot different had I been allowed to remain in London or 'urban' and culturally diverse parts of the UK instead of where I was made to live where I was the only black child in my class and the only one of 4 black children in the whole school. These are things needed to be taken into consideration".

"I had a positive experience of going into care, in the sense that our foster mum said to social services that if these children ever come back into care I'll have them back which she did. She later adopted me and my older brothers.

I would have liked to have not gone into care in the first place, I'm not advocating for keeping families together at all costs but I think in some cases interventions and prevention may help".

"Love and care wasn't a feature sadly of the childhood I experienced in institutions and occasional foster care...it always came with the caveat of not being good enough and certainly not equal to those who weren't seen as a 'coloured'

There's so many things, but stick with the basics, children need to have a sense of who they are and feel proud of their heritage and mix. Positive role models especially for those who are raised culturally unaware".

"I was unable to talk/ get help with CSA (molestation) that white foster father committed when I was very young. I couldn't explain what had happened & knew people wouldn't believe me-they didn't believe my mother due to her mental health issues. I only confronted him when in my 40s & family still don't know-laugh at the idea. Always told alternative to foster care was residential ('bad kids') or on drugs, prostitution & homeless at the age of 13yo.

Had to battle with 2 LAs to get funding to go to 6th form college. Had no help to get first flat-had to stay with foster family.

No help to get into university or when I dropped out.

No contact with family members-last saw mum at 8yo when she was effectively deported.

I did/do feel loved by foster family-still in contact but feel I paid heavy price & continue to bear emotional burden that led to current mental health issues.

Feel separate from black culture/identity/heritage.

Difficulty making & maintaining relationships due to trust issues to being in care.

I wish that I had access to family history & contact with relatives initiated, maintained & supported with access to emotional/psychological input".

“In answer to the question I call them Don't care homes”.

“I did not feel loved, wanted or cared for by my carers & workers & I never felt part of my foster families. I felt neglected, rejected & misunderstood by everyone in the care system. The Social Workers don't care about you & nobody listens to you”.

“Felt a minority in my own family, a transracial placement impacted negatively on sense of identity, confidence, sense of belonging”.

“I did not feel loved as there were other issues in terms of abuse and neglectful care from the foster carers. I think if I had have had decent care from carers inexperienced in promoting racial & cultural identity I would be more forgiving of this issue. I hold the system itself responsible rather than carers for promoting racial and cultural identity.

I didn't feel part of the foster family because it was so evident physically that I wasn't their child and people would stare a lot.

There are so many things - one would be Ancestry DNA testing to be completed for all children where heritage is not confirmed to enable children to grow up knowing their heritage rather than wondering”.

“Felt loved by most staff. However, there was always the odd few that created distress. Foster care I did not like. Woman was nasty. Would change more accessibility to psychological input and full support every step of the way. I received none, after experiencing horrific trauma when parents passed away. Due to this, I suffer with post traumatic stress disorder as an adult and an anxiety disorder. New issues have resurfaced. I was not given the opportunity to find closure”.

“I did not feel loved. I felt part of the family to an extent but there was always that feeling of being an ""outsider"" all the foster children had to use different cutlery and glasses. We had our own little ""living room"" while the foster carers had their own (separated). I never received hugs or any affection in care or pripr to being in care. As an adult hugs actually make me feel uncomfortable.

I think children in care need to be given the same love as any other child. We should not be treated any different”.

“I do feel loved by my carer. I don't feel part of her family but I feel part of her. More open mindedness-tackling the intersections Black queer people face”.

“Didn't feel loved. Didn't feel part of the family. Didn't feel culturally matched (even between African and Caribbean cultures - I'm African and was placed in a Caribbean culture I knew nothing of, and they didn't understand me)”.

“I felt loved by my foster mother. However not be those around me”.

“I just wish I could have been cared for by a Black mother. I wish I could have enjoyed the food I wanted, felt like I was being myself. Even the music I listened to was not really welcomed. I did not feel part of any family I was cared for by”.

“I felt loved by my grandmother, she was fiercely anti racist. My uncle held alot of stereotypical views about me which had a negative impact on my life for a long time”.

“I only felt cared for by 2 members of staff in the children's home. I felt other staff were not bothered about any of us children.

I never really felt part of my foster family, just an add on.

I would have liked for the social workers to put more in place for my future. I am a child of Windrush and due things not being put in when I left care at 18. The life I fought so hard to build has been left in tatters and left me re-traumatised and feeling inadequate”.

“Many of those residential social workers who cared for me were subsequently convicted and served jail sentences for a variety of child abuse charges.

Give children a voice, give them a culturally sensitive support mechanism, quality assure your recruits and create viable checks and balances to hold wrongdoers to account. Above all listen!”.

***“Did you/Do you feel loved by those who Cared/who Care for you? - yes
Did you feel/Do you feel like part of your Foster Family? – Yes”.***

“It is very difficult to feel part of a family when you move so many times. More permanence would have been helpful”.

“Didn’t feel loved, felt that the reason they was doing the job was solely down to finances.

There was a lot emotional manipulation and pitting children against each other in the family.

One thing I would change is wishing I had spoken out earlier”.

“I felt loved and cared for by my Foster Carers. They did their best, even though at times we didn’t always see eye to eye. They are in my life to this very day. The one thing I would change about my Care Experience is to make sure I had the therapeutic support at the point of entering into the system”.

“I felt loved by Foster family (my Foster Carer) took us in and showed a new life and raised us different to how we were being raised. I am blessed to have many mums.

Very much so, we went on many holidays and as well as visiting London.

I would be happy to do interview on my experience, I am also writing a autobiography which will contain my foster care life”.

“I felt extremely loved despite the cultural and racial differences however it would have been even better if my career understood my background and heritage and the fostering team/social workers did the same”.

“My fosters parents only did it for the money. Once I left at 17. They only came to visit me once. They tried to pressure me to tell my social worker to make me stay until I was 18. After that one visit never got a phone call or visit. But I always went back to visit them until I realised, I wasn’t really wanted there”.

“I only felt loved by one of my social workers”.

“I never felt loved by anyone apart from one foster carer. It was always clear to me I was just a job and a way to maintain a livelihood and it was clear as I often felt isolated from the foster family. I feel like hiring people with pure and honest intentions would be the first and most vital change that needs to occur”.

“I felt as though sometimes social services didn’t really care about the emotional impact of some of the decisions, they made such as making me move houses etc. I found the constant changing of

social workers overwhelming and it constantly made me build more walls”.

“I felt loved until 8 got older

And realised they only cared about the money and no I’m actually excluded from my foster family and its put a strain on my sibling relationship with me also I’d like to make social workers and foster career more a countable for the actions”.

“My foster family were pretty cool”.

“I felt physically cared for by my foster carer, not emotionally cared for or loved.

I was with my foster carer for years but never felt like part of her family. I wasn’t allowed to go in certain rooms, I wasn’t allowed to mix with her family and I felt like she treated me differently to how she would treat her own children or grandchildren.

If I could change one thing about my care experience it would be to have a positive emotional relationship with my foster carer and for her to make more of an effort to include me, getting to know me, and value my voice”.

“I didn’t feel loved when first being placed in care I was mentally and emotionally abused I was manipulated into thinking a type of way my first and second foster carers was the worst experience I could of ever had as a child if i was given an option on how I would change my care experience I would ensure that every child’s voice is heard whilst in care”.

“No one chooses to go into care but I do feel like the people involved tried their best to accommodate”.

“I wanted to be fostered again by white cares because of my confusion with my identity”.

“I was lucky to have a foster carer who was on a similar ethnicity and was willing to support me to understand my own cultural needs. However, I feel this positive experience was due to the foster carers own personal values rather than the support of my social worker. My foster carer would advocate for me while my social worker would never listen and make any effort to promote/meet the needs of me and my siblings.

I want social workers to be permanent. It is so difficult for children to have to change between social workers so frequently, and it contributes to their needs not being met. There were so many times when a social worker would make some progress in regard to listening to my thoughts, wishes and feelings and I would then have to start over with another social worker.

The leaving care service I received was extremely poor. I had to leave the foster placement where my siblings were and live at a semi-independent accommodation. I went from living with my siblings for several years to having contact 3 times a year. No one considered the impact this had on my mental health. No one checked how it even made me feel. I was moved out of the foster placement and left on my own”.

“I would like to see more positive media on black care leavers, more representation, more dialogue to understand other black people’s care experience.

It will help the dis-connect a lot of us feel and make us feel more rooted and confident in our shared experiences”.

“I think it’s hard as a young black person that they aren’t many workers that are black so it is hard to relate to or see mentors that help with questions especially as you start to shape your identity”.

“The transition from leaving the children’s home towards the rest of your life leaves a lot to be desired.

I was sixteen then, I think it is eighteen now, but with no one or thing to fall back on I was left to fend for myself and live on my wits. I made it, many didn't and this was then a crime to foist on unsuspecting children who's only misfortune was to have parents who were delinquent in their responsibilities. Unfortunately, so was the care system. I sincerely hope it has changed for the better now, and if not, that it rapidly gets with a program that give those who may have had a less than stellar start a chance at a bright future".

"Not really as bad as anything could have been nothing was as bad as where I first grew up, plus during my time in care, I was still full of so much hate and anger to care about much of anything else other than myself, since I was still in full time education and I wanted to have fun".

*"There is a lot that needs to be changed.
Safe spaces need to be created for people with care experience".*

In Our Survey there has been some evidence of Good Black Care Experiences, with Participants being able to share how they felt Loved by those who cared for them.

However, reflecting on the 'Voices' of those who were Farmed, the 'Voices' of those from the Black and In Care Steering Group, including the 'Voices' of those who have taken part in Our Survey, it is evidently clear that there are prominent, Consistent and Emerging Themes of Care, that did not promote and affirm the Identity or empower a Positive Sense of Self for the Black Care Experienced.

**CONSISTENT
&
EMERGING THEMES**

The **Consistent** and **Emerging** themes are as follows:

- Placements that are unable to promote our **Culture** and **Identity** impacting on how we see ourselves
- Placements that have a direct impact on how our **Hair** and **Skin** is cared for
- Placements that are unable to prepare us to return to and be a part of our **Community**, impacting on how we see our Community
- Placements that fail to prepare us for the **Racism** and **Discrimination** we may face in the World we live in
- Placements that are unable to be seen as a **Safe Space** to hear and understand our 'Voice' in relation to our Culture, Identity, Hair and Skin Care

These Themes mainly exist in the lives of those who have been **Transracially Placed**, which is defined as placing a child who is of one race or ethnic group with Foster Carers of another race or ethnic group, or placed in a Residential Children's Care Home to be Cared for by Staff who are predominately from another race or ethnic group.

The Themes go on to include **Racism, Discrimination** and **Prejudice** experienced in the homes of those who are to Care for those 'Black' and in their Care.

In the early **1980's** there were debates surrounding racism in society causing The Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professionals (ABSWAP) to raise their concern for the position of black children in care.

The Black and In Care **1984** Conference took place in the same year that the **Greater London Council's (GLC) Central Ethnic Minorities Unit** initiated '**London Against Racism**'⁶. Led by Ken Livingston, the GLC launched a yearlong publicity campaign producing awareness-raising advertisements and events aimed at developing policy and informing the public about the forms of racism that Londoners from ethnic minorities encountered in their daily lives.

Fast forward to present day and the surfacing of the **Windrush Scandal**, the death of **George Floyd**, and the Global uprising of **Black Lives Matter**, ring alarm bells of racism hidden but present, in organisations across each sector, including Children's Social Care.

Another Theme that identified is the **Overrepresentation** of Black including Mixed Race Children in Care. This was first identified in the early 1980's, where it is said that two separate surveys, carried out in London and Manchester, showed for the first time that children and young people from African, Caribbean backgrounds, and children of Mixed parentage were significantly overrepresented in care.

Based on these findings, in the 1983 Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professionals (ABSWAP)'s evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee –

Children In Care, ABSWAP viewed the failure to collect data on ethnicity as *'a conspiracy to silence'*, stating that *'black children are being taken from black families by the process of law and being placed with white families. It is in essence 'internal colonialism' and a new form of the slave trade, but only black children are being used'*.

In the **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NSPCC) 2019 Statistics Briefing: Looked After Children**, certain groups of children are more likely to be in Care than others. They evidence that UK children are **more likely** to be in Care if they are > **b) Black or Mixed-Race ethnicity** (except in Scotland where only children of mixed ethnicity is overrepresented)

	England 31 March 2018	Scotland 31 July 2017	Wales 31 March 2018
Proportion of looked after child population that is Black	7.1%	0.6%	1.4%
Proportion of under-18 population that is Black (under-20 for Scotland)	5.0%	0.9%	0.7%
Proportion of looked after child population that is of mixed ethnicity	9.5%	1.8%	3.0%
Proportion of under-18 population that is Black (under-20 for Scotland)	5.2%	0.9%	2.1%

In the UK children are **less likely** to be in Care if they are > **b) Asian**

	England 31 March 2018	Scotland 31 July 2017	Wales 31 March 2018
Proportion of looked after child population that is Asian	4.5%	0.8%	2.1%
Proportion of under-18 population that is Asian (under-20 for Scotland)	9.5%	3.3%	2.6%

Citing **Charlie Owen and June Statham's 2009 Research 'Disproportionality in Child Welfare', The Prevalence of Black and Minority Ethnic Children within the 'Looked After' and 'Child In Need' Populations and on Child Protection Registers in England**, the NSPCC went on to state *'Little is known about why certain minority ethnic groups are overrepresented whilst others are underrepresented within the care system. Research has identified a number of potential causes, including: lack of access to appropriate support services, greater unwillingness in some cultures to report concerns about a child's safety, or greater uncertainty among child welfare professionals about how to respond appropriately to the needs of minority ethnic*

families. However, it is likely that many different factors interact to contribute to the differences’.

The 2009 goes on to state that *‘research reviewed provides no simple answer to the question of why disproportionality exists’.*

The **Shortage of Black Foster Carers** is also a highlighted Theme.

The Department of Education’s National Statistics for Children Looked after in England (including adoptions) year ending 31st March 2020⁷, state that there are 80,080 Children in Care.

From that number, there are 5,860 Black/Black British Children in Care, made up of

- 1,370 known as ‘Caribbean’
- 3,260 known as ‘African’
- 1,230 known as from ‘any other Black background’

From that number, there are 7,780 Mixed Race/White/Asian/Black Children in Care, this figure is made up of

- 2,700 White Black Caribbean
- 890 White Black African

According to the **National Statistics, Fostering in England 2019 to 2020: Main Findings⁸**, there are 71,150 approved Foster Carers. Out of this number,

- 5,385 are Black/Black British
- 930 are Mixed Race
- 620 are from other Ethnic Groups

We were unable to ascertain the ethnicity of Staff working in England’s Residential Children’s Care Homes.

So, where do we go from here?

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Based on the consistent and emerging themes, it is imperative to now look at how to improve the practice of how those Black and In Care are to be suitably **Cared For**, by England's Children's Social Care System.

Our **Recommendations** are as follows:

Mandatory Training for Children's Social Care Departments

At first instance, it is important for the Directors, Managers and Staff within Children's Social Care Teams, to learn about how to **Care For and Promote the Culture and Identity** of the Black Child or Young Person who is now in their Care.

This will help to:

- Provide constant oversight over the 'Matching Process'
- Provide a Statutory 'Voice' to supervise how the 'cultural needs' of the Black Child or Young Person are being met
- Promote the 'aspirations' of the Black Child or Young Person
- Make sure the Black Child or Young Person is being 'positively' prepared for the wider world they are to live in and prepared to re-integrate into their community.

Mandatory Training for ALL Foster Carers and ALL Residential Children's Care Home Staff

Placing a Black Child or Young Person with the 'right' Foster Carer or in the 'right' Residential Children's Care Home, can no longer be **ONLY** assessed by the usual approval or risk assessment processes. The 'Voices' from Our Survey and within Our History, state **Loud and Clear** that these processes are not enough.

As stated above, the training will provide insight and knowledge on how to **Care For and Promote the Culture and Identity** of the Black Child or Young Person who is now in their Care.

This training will help to guide Transracial Placements, Cross Cultural Placements (e.g. where a Ghanaian Child or Young Person is placed in a Nigerian Household or where a Jamaican Child or Young Person is placed in a Barbadian Household or where a Nigerian Child or Young Person is placed in a Jamaican Household) and Culturally Matched Placements.

In the main, Training will help to highlight and identify as to whether a Black Child or Young Person, will experience racism, discrimination and prejudice through Children's Social Care or in a Residential Children's Care Home or in a Foster Care Placement.

Many people believe they do not have racial or cultural prejudices, and this belief could be because they have not been challenged by them. However, where a

person believes in racial and cultural equality for all, this does not necessarily mean that a person is free from subtle prejudices that can harm the Black Child or Young Person in their Care.

With that in mind, Training must be mandatory for ALL Foster Carers and ALL Residential Children's Care Home Staff and ALL Children's Social Care Staff, including those who are Black.

Why?

May 25th, 2020 marked the uprising of the Black Lives Matter Movement across the World. This uprising saw Black people find the courage to **Break the Silence and Speak Their Truth**, unearthing the painful memories they had buried about the **Covert or Overt racism** they had experienced. For the first time, Fathers and Mothers were sharing their stories with their children and giving them the **Talk** about how to live and navigate their way through this world.

Including those who are Black in every aspect of training, will help to create an ongoing open and honest dialogue about 'Race', a 'safe learning space' to make sure Children's Social Care remain reflective, relevant and culturally competent on how to take Care of the current and next Black and In Care Generation.

Care Package for The Black and In Care

When a Black Child or Young Person comes into Care, it is essential that the relevant Local Authorities Children's Social Care Department have this Care Package in place:

- Separate and additional funds to pay for their Hair Care and Skin Care
- Buddying up and Matched with a Black Mentor, a positive Role Model, to help promote their Culture, Identity and Aspirations
- Separate and additional funds to pay for Cultural Meals or lessons to learn how to cook their Cultural Dishes
- Lessons to learn their Native Language
- Funded trips to their Mother Country
- Access to a suitable Therapeutic Practitioner to meet their Mental Health and Wellbeing needs

Fostering Application Process

In the same way that Foster Carers are able to express their preference of the age and gender of who they would like to look after, it would also be beneficial for potential Black Foster Carers, to be able to specify their preference of wanting to Foster a Black Child or Young Person.

The Black Foster Network

Following the model of The Muslim Foster Network⁹, it would be beneficial to see the creation and implementation of The Black Foster Network.

Research and Data

England's Children's Social Care must now be consistent at collating data about the Care Experiences and outcomes of those who are Black and in their Care.

With that being said, the data collated must not be one sided.

Continuously being asked by Researchers to be part of research to investigate and study the Criminalisation of those who are Black and In Care, the Mental Health and Suicide Rates of those Black and In Care, and the involvement of Black Girls and Boys in Care with the Criminal Justice System, can seem as though those with the 'pen' are presenting us and portraying us in a negative light to a world, where some already find it hard to accept us; not only because we have been in Care, but also because of the colour of our skin.

Let research and data, capture and include the positive outcomes achieved by the Black Care Experienced.

The Department of Education's National Statistics of Children Looked After in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31st March 2015¹⁰, stated that *only 6% of former care leavers were in higher education (at University)*.

How many of the 6% were Black?

It is said ***"If you can see it, you can be it"*** and ***"Representation Matters"***.

With balanced positive representations of those who are Black and In Care, in Data, Research, the Media and on our TV, this will help to inspire hope and be a visual and living template of what can be possible, for those who are Black and in Care.

These positive representations will also help to mitigate the stereotypical and stigmatic view held by some, not only about Black Lives, but also about the Black Lives that are Cared for.

These positive representations may possibly help to open up genuine opportunities, that are not part of a tokenistic quota filling exercise.

It has been said that

“If we do not learn from History, we will continue to do the same thing”

With that in mind, implementing these recommendations will help to level up the Care Experience, for all who are Black and enter England’s Children’s Care System.

Implementing these recommendations will help to change the trajectory of those who are Black and leave England’s Children’s Care System.

Implementing these recommendations will help to shape the Care Experience for the next Black and In Care Generation(s).

REFERENCES

Our History Matters

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Reference 2 on Page 5

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