

THE *Black* CARE EXPERIENCE
CULTURE • IDENTITY • HERITAGE

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 6

OCTOBER 2023

A graphic for Black History Month. It features a dark background with a vertical column of colorful triangles (red, yellow, green, red, yellow, green) on the left. To the right of the triangles, the words "BLACK", "HISTORY", and "MONTH" are stacked vertically in large, bold, sans-serif capital letters. "BLACK" is red, "HISTORY" is yellow, and "MONTH" is green. Below the text is the tagline "Know the past, shape the future." in a smaller, white, italicized font.

BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH

Know the past, shape the future.

WELCOME TO THE BLACK CARE EXPERIENCE NEWSLETTER

If you've received this as part of being a member of our Network, or if you've taken the time to download it, we want to Thank You for being a part of our story and legacy.

As you read we hope that you will be inspired and challenged to help play your part in making sure that Black Children and Young People remain connected to their Culture, Identity and Heritage as they journey through the Care System.

Once read, if you have any comments or thoughts, please feel free to share them with us, by emailing us at office@thetransformedyou.co.uk

Also feel free to share any best practice with us, as together we join forces to continue to make a tangible and lasting difference in the lives of Black Children and Young People in Care.

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 www.theblackcareexperience.co.uk

 [@TheBlackCareExp](https://twitter.com/TheBlackCareExp)

 [@theblackcareexperience](https://www.instagram.com/theblackcareexperience)

OUR HISTORY MATTERS

The Black Care Experience Journey from the 1950's to Present Day

The 1950's to The 1970's

From the 1950's to the 1970's, we understand that West African children and babies were fostered out by their parents to white working-class families in the UK.

Ghanaian and Nigerian Parents would pay these families to take care of their children, whilst they studied in what had become the UK's International Student population.

This was an informal arrangement, a practice of Private Fostering and Adoption known as 'Farming'.

Placed with families, these children who are now adults, share their stories of how being in the Care of someone they could not culturally identify with, has had an impact on how they see themselves in relation to their own cultural identity and ethnicity.

Bringing this to life, the recently released film, *White Nanny, Black Child*, explores the story of over 70,000 West African children who were fostered unofficially by white British families between 1955 and 1995, as their parents pursued dreams of a better life in Britain.



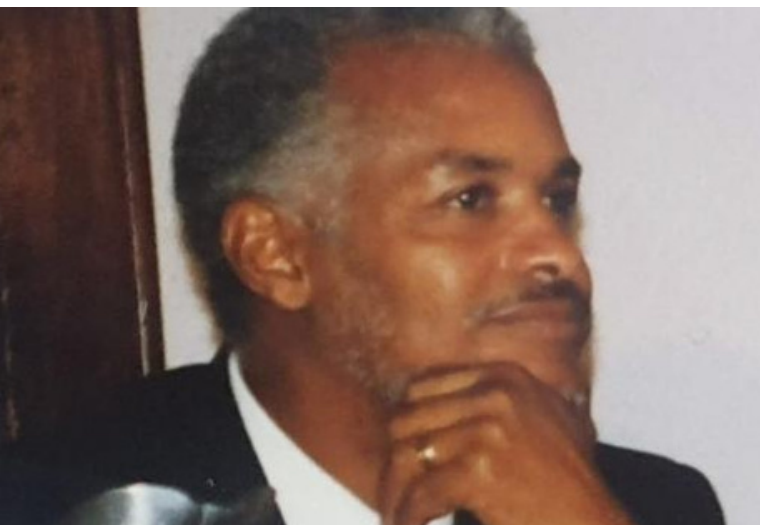
Fostered as babies were invited to take part in a retreat under professional guidance. The retreat was designed to encourage mental wellness and ignite a dialogue unlike any they've ever had. The retreat was led by two therapists who are experts in managing group dynamics and processing trauma in a holistic space. Through various activities, the contributors share their raw and revealing individual stories in a group setting that helps them overcome their experiences collectively.

The 1980s

Before the 1980's, it is said that the experiences of Black Children in Care were hidden from Black British History.

Two separate surveys, carried out in London and Manchester, showed for the first time that children and young people from African and Caribbean and mixed parentage backgrounds were significantly overrepresented in children's social care system.

At the same time, there were debates surrounding racism in British society causing the formation of **The Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professionals (ABSWAP)**, which was co-founded by the Late John Small.



The Association raised their concern for the position of black children in care **and saw the failure to collect official data on ethnicity [in care] as a 'conspiracy to silence'**.

The Association demanded that Black Children in the care system were treated with respect, dignity, had the right to know and hold on to their

cultural heritage, and needed strong links with Black Communities when placed with white families.

1984

We believe the work of ABSWAP sparked the formation of the **Black and In Care Group**, a powerful Group of Young Black People in Care who held their Conference in 1984, in order to share their experiences of being Black and In the Care System.

The Conference highlighted their collective experiences of:

- Being disconnected from their Culture
- How they were being cared for in relation to their 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

Their voices and their recommendations for change, were captured and documented in a Report, that was presented to the House of Commons Select Committee on Social Services.

We believe their Report influenced the **Children's Act 1989** which went on to

place a legal duty on Local Authorities on how to are to give consideration to how Black Children and Young People are to be cared for. The Act states 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 outlined 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**”.

This saw for the first time, the Black Care Experience, no longer hidden from Black British History.



2020

With this change to Legislation and Policy the dial slightly shifted in our favour, which led to some good examples of how Black Children and Young People experience the Care System, but it is fair and balanced to say that **40 years later** we still see Black Children and Young People continue to have a challenging time in the Care System, leading to them having the poorest outcomes and life chances in comparison to any other ethnic group, with the System not being held accountable.

In 2020 during Lockdown, **The Black Care Experience** was formed, because we had concerns about the Care, Outcomes and Life Chances of Black Children and Young in Care, and because we had concerns about how our Voice would be presented and represented at England’s Independent Children’s Social Care Review.

To be a part of the Review, we engaged in our own Research to evidence our experiences, documenting our findings in a Report that was submitted to the Review in 2021.

Here are some of the accounts we heard from some of our research participants.

“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”.

“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”.

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

“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”.

“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”.

“Black history in school only related to slave trade. [My] Own black culture [was] mocked by foster family”.

More insight can be found in our Report.

Through our Research we still see our Black Care Experienced Children and Young People:



- Disconnected from their Culture, Identity and Heritage
- Not having a Positive Sense of Themselves
- Not being Prepared for the wider world of Racism and Discrimination, along with experiencing Racism and Discrimination on their journey through the Care System
- Not having their Aspirations affirmed or Championed

With this understanding of Our History, we can only hope that you will inspired, motivated, compelled and challenges to help us shape a better Care Experience for the next and future Black and In Care Generation.



Have You Signed Up to THE BLACK CARE EXPERIENCE CHARTER?

The Black Care Experience Charter is a set of 8 commitments we've created to help Children's Social Care Teams or Departments and Voluntary Organisations within Children's Social Care, improve their service and practice of knowing how to shape a better Care Experience for Black Children and Young People in their Care.

As a signatory to our Charter, you'll be declaring your support and commitment to improving the Care, Outcomes and Life Chances of the Black Child or Young Person, and keep them connected to their Culture, Identity and Heritage, whilst they are in your Care or within your Service.

Although there are 8 commitments detailed in our Charter, you can sign up to anyone that relates to your Service, Department or Organisation. The commitments are:

1. The Workforces to actively address the systemic racial inequalities and discrimination on every level across the Departments and Services.
2. The Workforces to be Culturally Competent, on every level across the Departments and Services.
3. Work alongside Services that are culturally specific and competent to work with the Black Community.
4. Proactively seek to know and document the ethnicity of each and every Black Child or Young Person being placed in Care. Proactively engage in understanding and promoting their culturally identity and meeting their cultural needs.
5. Create a safe, relatable space for the True Voice of the Black Child or Young Person to be heard about how they are experiencing the System.
6. Create paid opportunities (inline with Industry/Sector standard rates of Pay) for Black Care Experienced Care Leavers to Consult, join Advisory Groups, co-produce and deliver training to the Workforces, from a Black Care Experienced perspective.
7. The Workforces to collate real time data on both, the Care Journey and Outcomes of the Black Child and Young Person. (not another conspiracy to silence).

8. The Workforces, to create their own Bespoke Policy on how to Care for and meet the needs of the Black Child or Young Person in Care.

You'll also invited to attend our Black Care Experience Charter Roundtable, once every 6 months, to meet with other signatories, discuss progress and share best practice.

Whilst we have opted not to publicize our list of signatories to the Charter, signatories have the opportunity to share that they are a part of The Black Care Experience Charter Journey.

With that in mind, let's hear from CoramBAAF.



What is the Black Care Experience Charter?

Summary: Ellen Broomé explains how CoramBAAF has signed up to the Black Care Experience Charter.

Original Publication Date: 16 June 2023



The reason I am writing this blog for CoramBAAF will be dishearteningly familiar to anyone working in our sector. Black children and young people are more likely to live in poverty, be excluded from school, be stopped and searched and arrested. Black children and young people are also overrepresented in the care system and as children in need. Meanwhile, the majority of senior social work leaders, foster carers and adopters are white.

What we also know, without a doubt, from decades of research asking children and young people what they want and need when in care – is that they want support to explore, understand and make sense of their own identity and heritage. That this is necessary for them to make their own way in the world.

This sector's responsibility matters a great deal to us at CoramBAAF. Over the last few years we, like many other organisations, have looked more deeply at our own practice and perceptions around equality, diversity and inclusion. And we didn't always like what we found. We weren't as good as we should or could be.

Addressing our failings has meant working hard to reform our own equality, diversity and inclusion practice – both internally how we relate to each other, but also how we support and work with our members to make sure they have the tools they need to support children, young people and families from a different ethnic background than their own.

As part of our work, as a staff group, we recently took the decision to join the Black Care Experience Network. Since then, we are proud to have signed up to The Black Care Experience Charter.

The Black Care Experience is a network of individuals and organisations coming together to improve the outcomes and experiences – today and in the future – for Black children and young people in care.

The Black Care Experience Charter is “a declaration of support and a set of commitments from The Workforces, to improve the Care, Outcomes and Life Chances of the Black Child or Young Person and keep them connected to their Culture, Identity and Heritage as they

journey through the Care System” and with the aim of bringing to life the legal duty of care stated in The Children Act 1989 “*Local Authorities are to give consideration to the religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background*” of the child to be placed”.

We have decided to focus on three of the principles in the Charter, to guide our work:

1. The Workforces to be Culturally Competent, on every level across the Departments and Services.
2. Work alongside Services that are culturally specific and competent to work with the Black Community.
3. Create paid opportunities for Black Care Experienced Care Leavers to join Advisory Groups, co-produce and deliver training to the Workforces, from a Black Care Experienced perspective while also providing support to help Black Care Experienced Care Leavers heal from the triggers that will surface and wounds that will re-open, in their quest to help bring about change.

Some of this we have already been working on but focusing on these three principles will help us develop a set of actions and activities and make positive change. We want to be held to account, so we will report back regularly to our members and colleagues on our progress.

Finally, there is strength in numbers. Changing the everyday experiences of Black children and young people in the care system to a better one requires all of us to play our part. So please, sign up, join, engage, think – and most importantly – take action!

Ellen Broomé, Managing Director, CoramBAAF

Details on how to sign up to The Black Care Experience Charter can be found [here](#).

If you're not ready to sign up to our Charter, you can always Join The Black Care Experience Network and be kept in the loop with our updates and Newsletters. Details of how to Join can be found [here](#).

coramBAAF
adoption • fostering • kinship

Bristol City Council

BEING THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE



In March 2021, a Working Group across Bristol City Council Children and Families Services was formed to formulate a Support Package for Black, Asian and other minority ethnic group children and young people in Bristol's care.

With a focus on children and young people in the care of fostering households who do not reflect or share similar cultures and ethnicities, we felt that carers and staff would need support to understand the children's cultural needs to be able to meet them comprehensively.

We noted that without such support most of the children would grow up knowing nothing about their cultural identities, not learn how to embrace their cultural differences and not accept who they are, which would lead to identity crisis and low self-esteem.

A need for part of the Support Package, was to support all the workforce which includes our Foster Carers to recognise the importance of cultural identity of Black and Brown children.

Following this, I met Judith Denton, at "The Black Care Experience Black Table Talk for all Directors of England's Children's Services and their Leadership Team Members" in September 2021. This was a webinar organised by Judith and her team to gather us together to share our views and experiences of what works and what does not work in how Black Children and Young People in our Care are being cared for, across Children's Social Care and across our Country.

The discussions at the Table Talk fitted perfectly with Bristol's project. Therefore, Bristol invited Judith (who is originally from Bristol) to join them to work together to realise our vision.

In November 2021, Judith joined the Working Group, working together to discuss and plan the next steps, which was to plan, organise and hold a Workshop for all the Workforce and our Foster Carers, which was held in June 2023. Judith was also our Co-Host for the event and our Key Note Speaker.

The purpose of the Workshop was:

- To recognise and celebrate the good work that is already being done in this area, in Bristol.
- To learn from our experiences and information across our Children's Services Departments and understand what else we need to do to improve the care journeys of black and brown children in Bristol.
- To commit to being the change we want to see.

The Workshop was attended by 150 people who were Children's Services Workforce, Foster Carers and Senior Management, with huge participation and positive feedback. We sense a unanimous motivation and driving force to make much needed change across all services.

So what are the next steps for Bristol?

Our Working Group will now be comprised of Bristol City Council Champions (BCC Champions), team members represented from each area of Bristol City Council Children and Families Services.

The Working Group of BCC champions will continue to meet with a focus on what we want to achieve, based on the output from the June 2023 Workshop.

The Champions will also take our action strategy back to their own services to devise workstreams to realise and achieve our goals. We are proposing that this Working Group will initially

meet every 3 months to revise our action strategy and keep holding ourselves to account. We also aim to have a second Workshop in 2024, to build on what we have started.

Judith has been a charismatic, great fountain of knowledge and her great passion, to improve the outcome for Black children and young people in care was inspirational for the Working Group and the Workshop participants. Her support and guidance was invaluable and her hosting skills exceptional. We look forward to working with her again in planning and delivering our second Workshop in 2024.

Felicia Bonsu

**Team Manager Fostering Service
Bristol City Council**

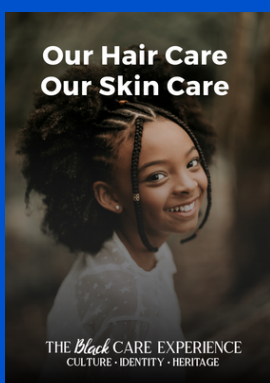
More Information about our Consultation Packages and Training Courses can be found [here](#).

RESOURCES

These resources will be great additions to your toolkit, to empower you with the insight and knowledge you need on how to raise and care for Black Children and Young People in Children's Social Care.



OUR HANDBOOKS



Our Hair Care, Our Skin Care

Our Handbook will provide you with in depth insight from our Experts, on how to care for the Hair and Skin of Black Children and Young People in Children's Social Care.

[Buy Now](#)



We Are Not The Same

Our Handbook will provide you with the basic understanding of the 54 African Countries and the 34 Caribbean Countries from where the Black Children and Young People in your Care, may originate.

[Buy Now](#)



WHAT TO WATCH

White Nanny Black Child | Channel 5

Set inside a safe therapeutic environment, nine adults share their raw and revealing individual stories of how they were unofficially fostered by white British families between 1955 and 1995, as their parents' pursued dreams of a better life in Britain.



The Last Tree

Growing up with his foster mother amongst the rolling fields of rural Lincolnshire, Femi's young life seems as idyllic as the landscape. But when he returns to London to live with his birth mother he begins to struggle with the culture and values of his new environment.

As the years pass, he must decide which path to adulthood he wants to take and what it means to be a young black man in London during the early 2000s. His search for self and identity will take him on an emotionally charged and utterly unforgettable journey through various stages of his life.



Farming

Farming is a 2018 British film written and directed by Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, based on his own childhood.

The plot is about a child whose Yorubá parents give him to a white working-class family in London in the 1980s, and who grows up to join a white skinhead gang led by a white supremacist.



Handle With Care

Jimmy Akingbola takes us on an uplifting journey through his own experience as a child raised by parents of different ethnicities to their own. Handle With Care is an unflinching but celebratory, feature documentary exploring adoption, fostering,

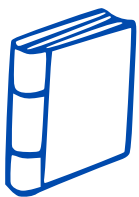


children's homes and the lived experiences of the parents and children of interracial adoption.

My Name is Leon

Leon, a mixed-race boy, and Jake, his white baby brother, are separated after their mother has a breakdown. Leon is determined to find him and gets unexpected support along the way. Although his foster carer Maureen, with her wild hair and potty mouth, treats him well,

Leon still longs to be back with his mum and younger brother, Jake. So he goes on a journey to figure out more about the world, about love and about what family really means - all with his favourite action figure Sergeant Smith by his side.



WHAT TO READ

Foster Care and Me by Judith AM Denton

In this real-life narrative, Judith openly details the challenges faced and overcome, at every stage of her journey through and out of the Foster Care System.

You'll also find 'Messages' she has penned to inspire hope to Children In Care and Care Leavers, along with 'Messages' to Foster Carers, Social Workers, School Staff and our Government, a call to action, to make the urgent changes she believes is needed to help improve the outcomes and life chances of our Looked After Community.

FOSTER CARE AND Me

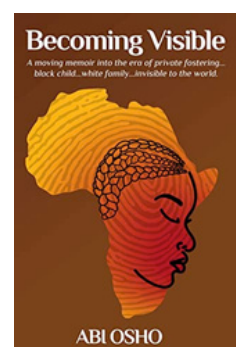


An autobiographical account of the challenges faced and overcome on a journey from Foster Care to Care Leaver to becoming an influential Social Entrepreneur

Judith AM Denton

Becoming Visible by Abi Osho

A black baby girl fostered by a white family at the tender age of 5 weeks old, shares her moving story of the search for identity and acceptance, whilst experiencing the power of resilience and forgiveness.



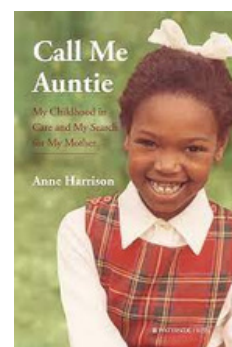
Knocked 4 Six by Ore Ogungbayi

Knocked 4 Six is a must read! It is a dramatic account of the early years of the author, Ore. It captures the knocks and the trauma experienced by a young person who suddenly finds herself vulnerable and exposed to a world where she has to look from the outside in. Rejection and Dejection become the side effects of One Major Traumatic Event. The book then offers Hope!



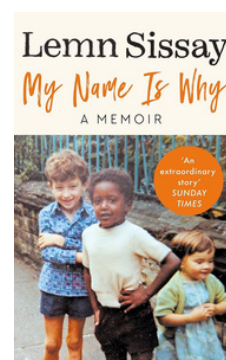
Call Me Auntie by Anne Harrison

A truly original story of life in and after care. The author's own account of being left behind by her mother as a one year old and her life in foster homes and institutions. When eventually traced, 'Call Me Auntie' was the best her mother could offer, but this was just the start of a bizarre sequence of events.



My Name is Why by Lemn Sissay

At the age of seventeen, after a childhood in a foster family followed by six years in care homes, Norman Greenwood was given his birth certificate. He learned that his real name was not Norman. It was Lemn Sissay. He was British and Ethiopian. And he learned that his mother had been pleading for his safe return to her since his birth. This is Lemn's story: a story of neglect and determination, misfortune and hope, cruelty and triumph.



Please feel free to check out our [Black Care Directory](#) for more resources, and feel free to send us further information of What to Watch and What to Read.

The Black Care Directory is a Consortium of Black Owned Businesses with Products and Services to help us all care for the Black Children or Young People in our Care.

Noticeboard

A FOSTER CARER EMPOWERING FOSTER CARERS

FROM SHADOWS TO LIGHT

ESSENTIAL
TRAINING
FOR YOUR
CARERS

EMPOWERING FOSTER CARERS AGAINST KNIFE CRIME AND GANGS WORKSHOP



Equip your foster carers with tools to shield our young people from gangs, cuckoo houses, honey traps and county lines

Resources exclusively designed for use for foster carers, social professionals and their young people

Techniques to bridge trust gaps and nurture positive relationships

Gain a deep dive into the latest data on knife crime and the hotspots



Jennifer's personal journey provides first hand experience and a unique perspective that has continued to provide reliable results over decades of working with young people.

JENNIFER JAMES
CEO, Spirit Arts Youth Ltd.
Award winning course trainer
and foster carer

ONLINE | OR | IN PERSON

07930 640 407
JJATSPIRIT@AOL.COM

Save The Date

THE BLACK CARE EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE 2024



DONATE AND SUPPORT OUR MISSION

Your financial gift will help to make a difference to the lives of Black Children and Young People who enter the Care System.

Your donation will help us not have to wait another 40 years to see a change in the Care, Outcomes and Life Chances of the current and next black and in care generation.



www.theblackcareexperience.co.uk/donate



CONTACT US

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Term Time Only

Monday - Friday: 10am - 4:30pm

Saturday & Sunday: Closed