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NAGALRO'S BLACK CHILDREN'S LIVES MATTER RESPONSE TO THE 'ADOPTION STRATEGY – ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE EVERYWHERE'

The stated intention of the Department for Education's document, *Adoption Strategy – Achieving Excellence*, is to ensure that all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential, although the focus of the document appears to be placed on the needs of the adopters, rather than the needs of children. The document indicates that 'too many families face barriers when they try to adopt a child ... too judgmental if you are not the right skin colour ... the only qualification that people need to worry about is whether or not they can love and care for a child.' The document suggests that 'love is enough' and it is not clear what the authors mean by 'care'. This suggestion is questionable when we consider that children come into care with all sorts of difficulties as a result of the parenting that they are likely to have received. They also have diverse backgrounds which indicate that other skills are required, rather than just love and care. Narrowing down the criteria to such a simplistic slogan minimises the high level of complex parenting skills that are required in adopters tasked with meeting the needs of the children, who each have individual, varied and complex needs.

The *Adoption Strategy* aims to reduce the waiting times for the 1,000 children still waiting over 18 months to be matched. The reasons given for the wait for adoptive placements are: that there are insufficient adopters; those adopters recruited are reluctant to adopt children who have waited the longest (possibly because they are likely to be the hardest to place due to their specific needs); that the adopters do not always receive the 'supportive welcome they need'; and because matching processes take too long.

The report indicates that although recent recruitment campaigns have increased the pool of adopters and that there are now more adopters than children waiting to be adopted (p 14), many of these prospective adopters want to adopt babies, or one child and not a sibling group. Groups of children who tend to wait longer than 18 months are those over five years old, sibling groups, children from ethnic minorities and disabled children. The focus of the leader of the RAA (Regional Adoption Agency) is now to consider adoption campaigns that focus on finding adoptive families who are willing to adopt the above groups of children, which is undoubtedly the correct approach.

To read this article in full please contact nagalro@nagalro.com