

FOSTERING & ADOPTION

May 16-22, 2005

www.voice-online.co.uk

CHERISH THE CHILD



I am delighted to be asked to write this introduction to *The Voice's* Cherish the Child campaign on private fostering. I have followed with interest the work that *The Voice* has been doing in raising the issues over the years and I commend them for taking this initiative.

Here at the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), we have taken a lead role in promoting the welfare of privately fostered children since 1992 and I am pleased to say that we are finally making significant progress.

In January, in England, the new draft Children (Private Fostering) Regulations 2005, draft Minimum Standards and draft Replacement Children Act guidance were published for consultation, along with a *What Works Guide* on raising awareness. The consultation period ended in April and it is expected that, following appropriate revisions, the regulations and other measures will come into effect this month.

In June, BAAF is holding a major private fostering conference chaired by Lord Laming, author of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, and we will be launching a guide for privately fostered children that will help local authorities meet the standards.

Similarly, *The Voice*, through the Cherish the Child campaign will be publishing information aimed at children in trans-racial private fostering arrangements on how to cope when they have to leave their foster carers to return to their birth parents and guidance for parents.

This information will be featured in a special publication *Private Fostering: Knowing the Unknown*, that will present the results from the survey on pages eight and nine. We are collaborating with *The Voice* on this project as we share many of the same aims and objectives and recognise the importance of presenting a diverse approach to the subject.

I am hoping the survey results will provide a welcome addition to the body of work that exists on this subject. Above all, I hope that it gets people in the community beyond talking, so they can act on private fostering.

Felicity Collier, BAAF's chief executive



Felicity Collier: chief executive of the BAAF

Plus: Have a little faith in fostering (p2); all you need to know about private fostering (p3); do your bit for the kids by filling in our private fostering survey (p4)

FAITH IN OUR CHILDREN

Religious communities are sought to help support in fostering

Through partnership approaches and actively targeting areas where people congregate such as hair-dressers, barber shops and local group settings, the black community can start to mobilise itself to place adoption and fostering on the agenda.

However, the place where that message can be most powerfully heard is within the faith communities.

"It is clear that churches, mosques and faith communities can play very important roles in spreading this message," says social worker and consultant Amma Aname Agyei who is also the author of *Working with Black African Children and Families*. Information from the Office for National Statistics, drawn from the 2001 Census, supports this. Statistics show that 71% of black people are Christians and that South Asians and Black Africans are the most religious groups.

In April, a number of churches joined together in Pray for the Child Day as part of the Cherish the Child initiative on private fostering.

We hear from four church leaders who took part.

Rev. Isaac Adigun of The Apostolic Faith Mission UK
95 Fenham Road, London SE15 1AE
"It is time that we openly address the issue of private fostering, adoption and fostering in the community and show the children that we value them. The Bible says that children are the heritage of the Lord. They have come into the world through us but they are given to us from God and as such, we will be accountable to God for what we do to these children."

Bishop Gerald Edmund of Bethel United Church,
254 Church Road, St George, Bristol, BS5 8AR

"Jesus said 'suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for such is the kingdom of heaven'. This is one of the themes that I used during our service. There are so many disadvantaged children around (including children who experience abuse and neglect) that I keep asking people to spare some of their time to give love to these children. This forms as a regular part of our service."

Pastor Margaret, Ark of Salvation Pre-Ministry,

7 Elphorne Road, London N19
"It is our duty to pray for all the children who need to be cared for. We will continue to pray for the children awaiting homes. It will be as if we are sowing a divine seed into their heart and God will create a divine parent for them."

Pastor J O Olalere, Christ Apostolic Mount Zion International

1A Sumner Road, London SE15 6LA
"The black community needs to be aware of the important issues around fostering and adoption. From my own experience, there are many of us who think it is something that we cannot do and that it is mainly for white people. It is time to enlighten some members of the community. The Cherish the Child initiative could be the start of raising that awareness."

Name: Elias Asubiojo

Job title:

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) link officer for services to African children and their families.



How can black families learn to cope with the difficulties of raising a child?

We know that raising children in today's society is challenging for all communities. It's very important to ensure that African families don't feel isolated and think they are the only ones having problems raising their children. If we want to give African families someone to turn to, we must earn their trust. A large part of what I do is to develop and build on this trust.

What do you do?:

My job involves developing partnerships between the African voluntary sector and the NSPCC. This means working together to ensure that the needs of African children and young people are met, and that their welfare is promoted. One of our key achievements this year has been to lead and be a key partner in setting up the African Child Alliance, which is a group of African professionals who are working together to raise the profile and ensure the voice of African children is heard.

My job is to ensure African groups have access to all the relevant resources and that they maximise their capacity for ensuring the safety of children in their care. I strongly believe that some of the difficulties African families face can be dealt with more effectively if their ethnic and cultural differences are recognised and valued.

Ealing Fostering & Adoption Connections

Meet Angel...

7 months old Angel is an adorable little baby girl with a charming smile. She is very responsive and is absolutely delighted when people 'talk' to her, responding by babbling and smiling. Angel's foster carer says that it is a joy caring for her.

Little Angel has been diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis and has had hospital admission when she was one month old, as she was not gaining weight. She is now gaining weight and responding positively to the treatment that she is undergoing.

Angel needs to have a high-energy diet, but may still have a tendency to lose weight whenever she is unwell. Due to her condition Angel needs physiotherapy twice a day and to regularly take her medicines before all her meals.

Angel needs a family who has a strong commitment to her. She needs warm and compassionate parents who can set a good routine around her and manage her medical treatment well. Professional support will be offered to the adopters.

Angel's mother is white UK and there is very little known about her father. Angel presents as a child of dual heritage. We are seeking a permanent family, ideally through adoption, who are committed to her health needs and can provide Angel a loving and nurturing home.

*Child's name has been changed for legal reasons

If you have the right family for Angel or Kevin, please contact Sonali Karve directly on 0208 825 6904 or email karves@ealing.gov.uk. Alternately call:



Meet Kevin...

Kevin is a charming little baby boy whose foster carers describe him as delightful and an 'easy to care' for baby. Kevin who is nearly a year old has long soft hair, which is tied in a little ponytail.

Kevin loves his food and can "tell you when its mealtime!". He has been recently introduced to savoury and sweet and absolutely loves it! He will play quietly and entertain himself, however when he hears his carers' voice he does want their attention. His favourite toys are his big blue fluffy duck and his little beige teddy with a rattle inside it.

Kevin is meeting all his developmental milestones and loves colours and fast moving pictures. He seeks comfort from his carers when he gets tired and likes to hold his carer's hand while trying to sleep whilst stroking his hair soothes him.

Kevin's carers describe him as alert and a very responsive baby who loves the company of children and adults around him. Kevin is a healthy baby thriving in the loving environment of his carers.

Kevin is of African Caribbean descent and has been baptised a Christian. Kevin needs a family who reflects his heritage and would nurture and cherish him in a loving, caring and a secure family environment.



FREEPHONE 0800 731 6550

fosteradopt@ealing.gov.uk

WHAT IT TAKES TO CARE

The lowdown on private care as the campaign continues

The Voice launched its private fostering awareness campaign last month with a pocket guide to private fostering and an invitation for readers

to give their views on the practice. Here is your last chance to find out about this childcare practice and have your say in the reader-led survey.

- ✓ holidays
- ✓ Teenagers
- ✓ Trafficked children



Campaign supporter:
David Akinsanya

A GUIDE TO PRIVATE FOSTERING

What is it about? Private fostering is defined by law as: when a child under 16 (18 if disabled) is looked after for 28 days or more by somebody who is not a guardian, close relative or somebody who has parental responsibility. In effect, it is a private arrangement between the parent and the person who is going to care for the child. The social services department is not responsible for placing the child.

But that's kinship care, right?

Wrong. Although there is a tradition of looking after one's own in the black community, and acting on the idea that "it takes a village to raise a child", some members of the extended family, which includes non-related "uncles" and "aunties", will be privately fostering. It is a complex situation, where there is some confusion, and BAAF has asked the Department for Education & Skills to define the differences between private fostering and kinship care. BAAF's mini research on private fostering noted that a number of privately fostered children were being cared for by kinship carers who were not formally assessed as foster carers, and who were trying to provide good enough care with no support.

What type of children have qualified?

- ✓ Children placed with strangers
- ✓ Children with family friends or other acquaintances
- ✓ Children of parents who work long and unsociable hours
- ✓ Refugee children
- ✓ Students at language, summer schools and those at boarding school who may not go home during the long

What do you need to do?

Notify social services of the arrangement (this is required by law) so that they can make checks on the carer and ensure the arrangement is satisfactory. They will also carry out regular checks as a safeguarding process. It will still remain an arrangement between the birth parent and private foster carer. (See www.baaf.org.uk for more information.)

What do social services have to do?

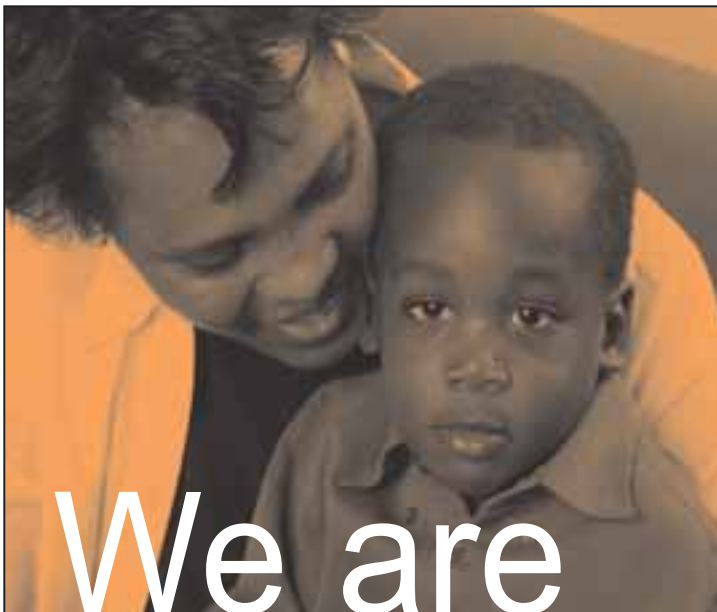
Publicise information about private fostering and carry out the necessary checks on the foster carers to ensure that the child will be safe. From April 2005, local authorities were required to collect statistics on the number of children in private fostering arrangements in their areas. One way of finding out more is to log on to a search engine and type in private fostering and gov.uk. This will give you numerous local authority sites with information/booklets on private fostering and their criteria.

How many children are privately fostered?

The figure that is quoted is 10,000 from the then Department of Health and Social Security, which stopped collecting figures around 1990. However, other estimates have been in the region of 15,000-20,000. Last year, Terry Philpot, author of a major study on private fostering, estimated that there could be 30,000 children in private fostering.

Are there any benefits to private fostering?

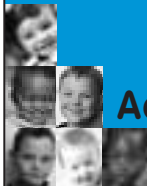
Yes. Where young people find themselves homeless and stay with somebody they know, children and teenagers who are placed with people they know because their parents are hospitalised will allow parents to pursue their educational goals, which is something that private fostering has traditionally been associated with. Academic Bob Holman, the father of private fostering for his pioneering research and work on private fostering has written about this together with author and former Community Care editor Terry Philpot. The issue is about safety and welfare of the children.



We are
the building blocks of the future

You could adopt too.
Call our 24 hour hotline

0800 952 0707



Adoption

building today for Soutwark's tomorrows



City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

www.bradford.gov.uk

Children need...

families and single people in the Bradford district who can provide them with a loving home

Adopters and foster carers come from all walks of life. You don't need to be married, own your own home or have special qualifications.

What is important is that you are committed to children and young people and have qualities like patience and understanding.

To find out more about becoming a foster carer

or adopter please telephone : 01274 434331

or why not visit our website at:

www.bradfordadoptionfostering.org.uk

Adoption and Fostering – ordinary people doing something special



The Voice private fostering survey

1. Are you male or female?
 2. Nationality:
 3. Did you know what private fostering was before reading this supplement?
 4. Do you have any experience of private fostering?
 5. Do you know anybody who is/has privately fostered children?
 6. Of the arrangements you know, are the arrangements of the same nationality or are they transracial?
 7. What are the reasons for the private fostering?
 8. Do you know anybody who has lost their child to adoption through this?
 9. Do you know an adult who was privately fostered?
 10. Was their arrangement transracial?
 11. What were you told, if anything, of their experiences?
 12. Have you ever heard of any difficulties resulting from private fostering?
 13. If you have any further comments on this topic, please add them here
- PARENTS**
14. If you are a parent who has privately fostered your child, please indicate the year you did so:
 15. What does private fostering mean to you?
 16. Do you feel you had all the knowledge you needed to make your decision?
17. Did you ask any questions about the arrangement?
 18. Is/was the arrangement transracial? If yes, why?
 19. In which location did it take place?
 20. Why did you choose private fostering?
 21. Did you have clear plans about the length of stay?
 22. How did you find your foster carer?
 23. Do you have any friends privately fostering children?
 24. How do you view your relationship with your children?
 25. Would you have done things differently?
 26. Have you ever spoken to your children about it?
 27. If you have any further comments on this topic, please add them here
- EXPERIENCING PRIVATE FOSTERING**
28. When did you realise that you were privately fostered?
 29. Do you make a distinction between fostering and private fostering?
 30. How often did you see your parents?
 31. How long were you there before your parents took you home permanently?
 32. Were you prepared for this?
33. Were you privately fostered alone?
 34. Have you ever broached the subject with your parents?
 35. If yes, did you get a satisfactory answer?
 36. What is your view on this?
 37. Is your relationship with your birth family strained?
 38. Do you discuss what they did?
 39. Do you think you missed out on anything by not being raised by your family? Please elaborate.
 40. Do you know any other people who were privately fostered?
 41. How did you find the experience?
 42. Do you ever suffer from any anxieties?
 43. Do you tell people that you were privately fostered?
 44. How do you define yourself?
 45. How do you feel when you are surrounded by people of your parent's ethnic origins?
 46. If you have any further comments on this topic, please add them here

Thank you very much for completing this survey. Your help is very much appreciated. Please email your completed form or answers on a separate sheet of paper to Advertising, Blue Star House, 234-244, Stockwell Park Road, London, SW9 9UG or fill it in online at survey@ebonyreads.com by 31 May 2005.

Anthony Brown DOB 13.07.2003



Anthony is a beautiful, happy little baby boy, who has met all the developmental milestones and has no health problems. Anthony is an affectionate baby and eager to please adults and children around him by giving them smiles. He has formed a strong attachment to his carers and responds to them by smiling. Anthony is particularly fond of his foster father in the recent months he started walking and speaking a few words.

Heritage: Black African/Caribbean
Legal status: Anthony is subject

of Full Care Order and free for adoption.
Religion: Christian.

Family Needed
One or two-parent family, who can offer Anthony a permanent home with love and consistency.

Contact: We envisage Anthony to have letterbox contact with his mother and older sister and grandmother
For further information please contact Iran McGinn on Tel: 020 8937 4534, or write to Triangle House, Brent Placement and Adoption Team, 328-330 High Road, Wembley, HA9-6AZ, or email: iran.mcgin@brent.gov.uk

SHAKIRA 2 years old [21.9.02]



Ethnic descent: Birth mother is Nigerian, Birth father is Black [ethnicity unknown].
Religion: Birth mother is a non-practising Christian
Legal Status: Care Order
Contact: 1-2 yearly letterbox contact with birth mother and three half-brothers is envisaged.

Health and Development
Shakira was born prematurely with traces of cocaine in her blood as her birth mother had taken this drug whilst pregnant. Shakira suffered minor withdrawal symptoms which soon disappeared and have not recurred. She was in hospital for two weeks before being placed with foster carers. Shakira has had twice yearly statutory medicals and no concerns have been expressed. She is in good general health. Her overall progress and development are all within the appropriate centile for her age.

Shakira had been placed with two different foster carers before returning to her birth mother's care for almost two years – initially in a residential drug rehabilitation unit and then at home. Sadly birth mother returned to drugs and Shakira was placed with another foster carer where she has been since the end of October 2004. She had formed a strong attachment to her birth mother. She has now formed a good attachment to her present foster carer.

Nursery
Shakira started nursery in October 2004 and enjoys attending five mornings each week. She plays with the other children and also plays on her own. She

particularly likes the soft toy room and playing on the bikes.

General
Shakira presents as a petite, very lively child who is very interested in her surroundings. She is a strong and robust child full of energy and enthusiasm. She is learning to talk and says 'no' emphatically and 'bless you' when she sneezes. She also says 'stop it'. Shakira will also say 'ta' when given her bottle or a toy.
She is always very active, has a good appetite and enjoys a variety of foods – except pasta – and sleeps well. She likes being in the company of other children and generally enjoys company. Shakira's foster carer says: "She gives a lot of love, is very affectionate – although she doesn't always want to be lifted and cuddled. She is very

entertaining. She loves music and dances and sings. She is bright, intelligent, well developed and happy"
Shakira is able to drink from a cup or a carton with a straw. She feeds herself using either a fork or spoon. She is able to put on her shoes and socks and tie up her laces. She recognises shapes and loves doing six-piece puzzles. She counts from one to five and is learning to share toys with others.

Family sought
We are seeking an ADOPTIVE Black African/Nigerian one or two parent family – possibly with older children. We would also consider a Black African/Caribbean one or two parent family. We need a family able to accept a degree of uncertainty regarding Shakira's possible future development due to prenatal exposure to cocaine. Shakira's foster carer believes she needs: "a family who have a lot of time for a child who yearns for attention and who is very energetic. A family who can take her outdoors – shopping, to the park or anywhere, as well as recognising she has a strong personality and allowing her to develop this".
If you would like to find out more about Shakira, please contact Cathy Newman at Brent Placements, Triangle House, 328-330 High Road, Wembley, Middx, HA9 6AZ or telephone on 020 8937 4535 or e-mail: cathy.newman@brent.gov.uk

Sean DOB 7.2.02 Stephen DOB 7.4.03



Sean and Stephen are brothers. They have a very special relationship with each other. Their foster carer has described them as adorable children who are easy to care for. They are bright, energetic little boys, who like outdoor activities. They enjoy playing together and watching telly tubbies. Sean is an inquisitive little boy who likes books and Stephen looks to be following in his footsteps.
They have good attachments with their foster family and interact well with other children.
Health: Birth mother has mental health problems and we are unsure about birth father's mental health status.

Sean and Stephen present as healthy little boys meeting all their developmental milestones but there is suspected disability which may be related to bone deformity which is uncertain at this stage.
Heritage: Birth parents are African Caribbean/Jamaican

Legal Status: Care Orders
Family Needed: Sean and Stephen need to be placed together with a family who closely reflect their racial and cultural background. We would like a family who would be prepared to offer these delightful little boys a good home where they would be loved, nurtured and help them reach their full potential.
Contact: We envisage Sean and Stephen will have letterbox contact with their birth parents.
Financial Support: An adoption allowance will be payable for both children.
If you would like to discuss Sean and Stephen please contact Marie Fletcher on 020 8937 4536 or write to Triangle House, Brent Placement and Adoption Team, 328-330 High Road, Wembley HA9 6AZ or e-mail: marie.fletcher@brent.gov.uk

For further information please contact the adoption team on:
TEL: 020 8937 4525, or Free phone 0800 731 5353
write to Triangle House, Brent Placement and Adoption Team, 328-330 High Road, Wembley, HA9-6AZ

BRENT ADOPTION TEAM

