

Message from Yvette Stanley, Ofsted National Director Regulation and Social Care, 12 June 2020

To children's social care providers and local authorities:

I am sure that colleagues across the social care community have been profoundly moved and affected by the tragic death of George Floyd. In response, we've seen a groundswell of concern and protest around the country. Whilst it was prompted by events in the United States of America we also know that the Covid19 virus has had a disproportionate impact on black and minority ethnic communities in the UK. So both events have surfaced persistent and painful racial inequalities: institutional, systemic and long-standing. Individually and collectively we will have responded with sorrow and with anger. Our responses will be shaped by and be reflective of our own lived experience and so for black and minority ethnic colleagues those feelings will be particularly acute.

I do however hope and believe that we stand together as a social care community, in our determination to challenge, to learn and to change for the better. We know our best work is child and family centred, relationship based and founded on values including appreciating diversity and promoting social justice and fairness. Whilst we often focus on the individual relationships which support positive change for children and families, at our best we also work with partners to tackle the wider social, economic and civic barriers to success. Unless professionally and personally we proactively tackle racial inequality, we are leaving in place a barrier which fetters opportunity and perpetuates injustice at a system level and which causes pain and harm for individuals.

I know colleagues out there will be dealing with the impact of that anger and grief with our children and families and within the organisations we work in or lead. I share my thoughts at this time as a leader committed to the shared endeavour to do better and be better.

Test and trace service

Some social care providers have expressed to us their concerns about the possible implications on their services of the test and trace system. We would like to assure you we have passed those concerns on to the Department for Education.

We have been asked further about staffing in children's homes as a result, and that includes from local authority children's homes on whether contingency plans could include using foster carers in homes in the event of permanent staff being sick or having to isolate.

Our response is that providers may need to take some pragmatic decisions during this difficult time, particularly given the impact of the arrangements in place for tracking and tracing. Decisions should be made in the best interests of children taking into account the circumstances to provide a continuity of care. This could include deploying foster carers in children's homes, but we would still expect them to

have the right skills to care for that group of children and that they are appropriately supported.

I hope this update is helpful and please do continue to send us your queries to socialcare@ofsted.gov.uk.

Best wishes,
Yvette