**Update for ACEVO**

In 2020 we at Contact, the charity for families with disabled children, made a commitment to become an anti-racist organisation. This is very much a work in progress, and we are committed to the process in the long term. As a first step we formed a Race Equality Group, and over the last 18 months this has been working to deliver the first steps as set out in a clear and public plan.

On a personal note, I remain fully committed to Contact becoming a truly inclusive organisation, able to effectively support families with disabled children from all communities. I have learnt a lot both from colleagues, and from the anti-racism resources we have read and discussed together as a Senior Management Team throughout the year.

Our approach has been to make a start on the more obvious first steps, so that we could begin to move forwards, and we will now recruit further support to help us move beyond these. Our original plan was set out in four sections, and a short update on our progress over the last 18 months is outlined below.

1. **Leadership**

We set out to work towards a more diverse Board of Trustees, setting a 25% Board diversity target to be achieved in 2023, and to work towards a more diverse Senior Management Team.We implemented more inclusive recruitment strategies, and as of Spring 2022 our Board is 80% white.

*“There is agreement amongst Trustees that we must challenge ourselves to really appreciate and value the potential impact and gains of having a more diverse board. This involves actively reaching out and listening to beneficiaries from a broad range of communities and cultures and working to ensure they are represented at Board level, thus having a more diverse range of thoughts on board. As a constant check and balance, we need to ask ourselves ‘the so what question’ – looking for positive outcomes as a result of our actions.” (Trustee)*

All staff and trustees completed anti-racism training. 71% felt they had a greater understanding of what anti-racism means and a desire for continued development with smaller and more tailored in-depth sessions.

1. **Our staff team**

We reviewed and expanded our Equality and Diversity Policy and refreshed our Recruitment policy to be more actively anti-racist.

We asked Black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues what would support them in Contact. As a result colleagues came together to set up ‘The Network’ which is an informal group welcoming Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic colleagues (including staff from mixed backgrounds featuring one of more of these groups). Over the last year the group have *“met up for chats, guest speaker events and general breathers – we have laughed, cried, been shocked and surprised but never once missed a cuppa!”*

1. **External communications**

We set out to ensure that the experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic families are reflected in our Campaigns. As part of this work we collated existing research evidence on the experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic families with disabled children, and explored potential funding and partners for further research into health inequalities.

We secured funding from NHS England to explore awareness of Annual Health Checks amongst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic families, identifying the barriers to accessing the checks and exploring alternative approaches.

We have taken steps to ensure our communications, imagery and case studies are more representative and reviewed our language guide.

1. **Governance and accountability**

We established policies and processes to collect ethnicity data for families and colleagues so that we can analyse trends to inform the next phase of our race equalities plan. This involved extending the points at which we collect ethnicity data, as well as analysing the data we hold in order to provide insight for service development.

We built race equality plan targets into our central strategy reporting processes, met regularly as a group with representation from trustee and family representation alongside employees, and reported regularly to our Board on progress.

Alongside our central Race Equality Plan individual teams and service have been working to progress race equality in their work. A highlight this year this has included co-producing a Diversity Toolkit to provide practical support to Parent Carer Forums to extend their reach and welcome parent carers from all their local communities.

**Going forwards**

Going forwards, to extend ownership for this agenda and recognise the wider work that is going on across the organisation, all teams have been invited to share actions that they will take to support race equality in their work in 2022-23.

Our Race Equality Group will review the team plan actions and put together a central plan to both support teams, and to take forward the actions arising from the work to date described above. We have identified a need to resource this work and our wider equality and diversity agenda in order to move beyond the first steps we have taken. To this end we are recruiting a Head of Inclusion and Organisational Development to support me as CEO as I continue to chair the group.

We understand that we have a long way to go and remain fully committed to making progress and building on the work we have started to develop a truly inclusive organisation.