

Black Adoption Project

Creating better futures for Black adopted children in London

Insights and learning from the journey so far...

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Context

- Disparities for Black children in adoption have been a 'stuck' problem in the UK for decades
- Despite a huge amount of anti-racism-related messaging in recent years, understanding of racial issues remains limited (Tedam and Cane, 2022), leadership commitment and action to tackle racism is varied (Ayakwa, 2023) , and racial oppression and inequalities persist (Brown et al, 2021)
- The Black Adoption Project is a well-established, long-term commitment, to better understand, co-develop and implement action to create change
- Partnership across the 4 Adopt London RAAs, and independent consultancy LBTC
- Racial disparities in adoption particularly impact Black and mixed Black ethnicity children – and do not impact all children from Global Majority backgrounds in the same way

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Phase 1 report - key findings

- Metadata analysis, survey and focus groups.
- There are disparities throughout the system for Black children, particularly in timescales for matching, and in care outcomes following a Placement Order.
- Range of barriers for Black prospective adopters, including entrenched systemic issues.
- Stark reminder of the over-representation of Black children in our care system in comparison to the population.
- Challenge of approving enough adoptive parents for our Black children.



396

Black adults in London population
for every **1** Black child looked after



1,417

white adults in London population
for every **1** white child looked after

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Key findings

Black Caribbean children were **12 times more likely** than other children to have 'prospective adopters could not be found' provided as the reason for the change in their care plan away from adoption

The most significant delays for Black children in the adoption process occur in the Family Finding stage, after a Placement Order is granted but before a matching decision is made; when other factors are held constant, Black children spent on average 6½ – 8 months longer in the adoption process before moving in with their adoptive family

Black households took the same amount of time to progress through the assessment process and were not any quicker than others in the matching phase, which is unexpected

Households of Black-only ethnicity were around 5 – 6 times more likely than white-only households to leave the adoption process without adopting a child

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What we were told

Financial barriers

Adoption process

Barriers to adoption

Adoption support

Racism at multiple, connected levels

The public perception of Black boys is a barrier in adoption.

Totally disagree

1

Totally agree

10

8



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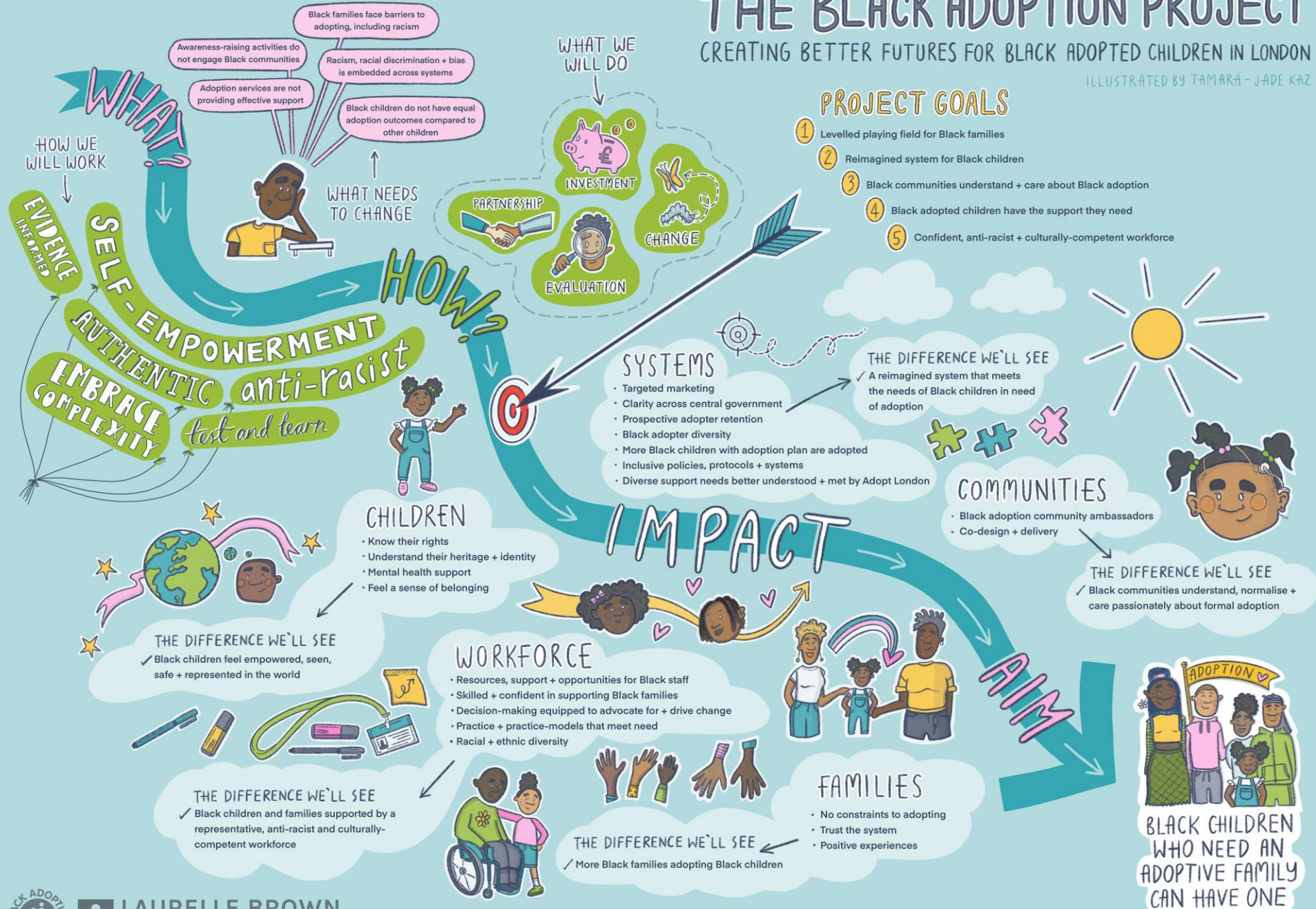


The journey

THE BLACK ADOPTION PROJECT

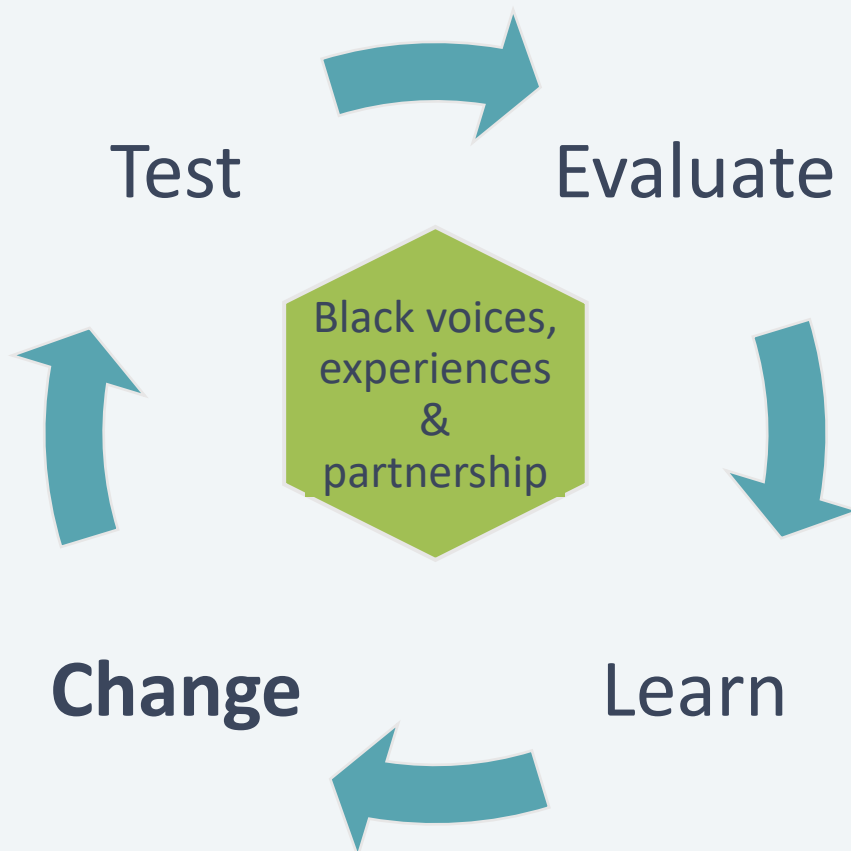
CREATING BETTER FUTURES FOR BLACK ADOPTED CHILDREN IN LONDON

ILLUSTRATED BY TAMARA-JADE KAZ



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“Collectively shifting underlying structures, mindsets, and power dynamics that keep problems in place, not just addressing symptoms.” ([Walkme, 2024](#))



- Co-creation and stakeholder feedback
- Iterative processes – testing and learning from change at multiple levels
- Complex system, within a complex society – non-linear cause and effect.
- Cross-organisational collaboration and delivery

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Principles for change

- We understand that as an institution-led project, we must continually **reflect and hold ourselves to account on how we hold, share and use our power**. We work with Black children, adoptive families and communities to effect change. We **create conditions** for self-empowerment, challenge and leadership.
- We collect **data and insight** to evidence barriers, success, questions and assumptions.
- We **recognise the complexity of systems and society** we are part of. We take an iterative approach to testing and learning change, remaining agile and open to all possibilities.
- We acknowledge that **racism permeates all aspects of society**. We are proactive committed and taking sustained action to eradicate racism. We are anti-racist.
- We don't know what we don't know. We commit to **continuous learning and development** to understand, grow and change to achieve the best possible outcomes for Black children.
- **We are authentic**. We are not perfect and will make mistakes. However, we learn from our mistakes; and are open and honest in the process.
- We embrace complexity and uncertainty, **holding tensions and challenges together as a necessary and inevitable part of the change journey**.

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Research and pilot projects

Metadata
analysis
research

Prospective
adopter
retention
pilot

Black
therapists in
adoption
support
research

Safer spaces
for Black staff
pilot

Socio-
economic
barriers
research

Staff
recruitment
pilot

Workforce &
EDI audit
research

Information
& enquiry
process pilot

Young
people's
groups pilots

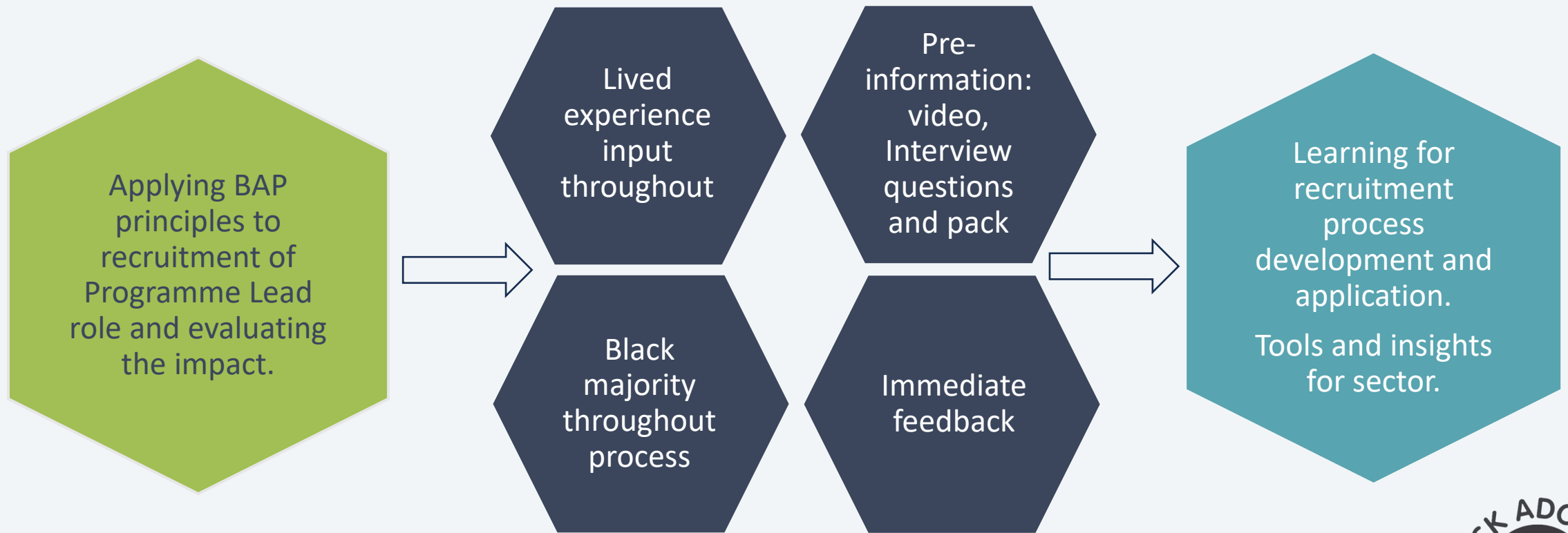
Family
finding
journey
research

Community
champions
pilot

Green projects are directly funded by Adoption England

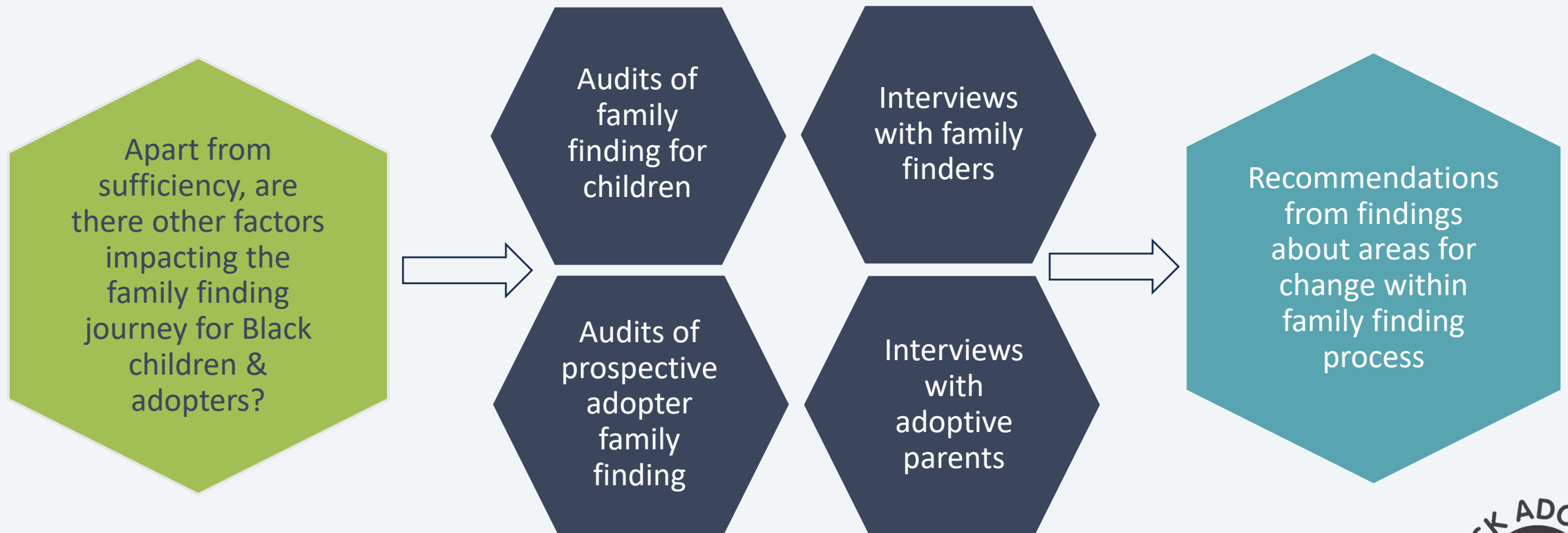
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Family finding journey research



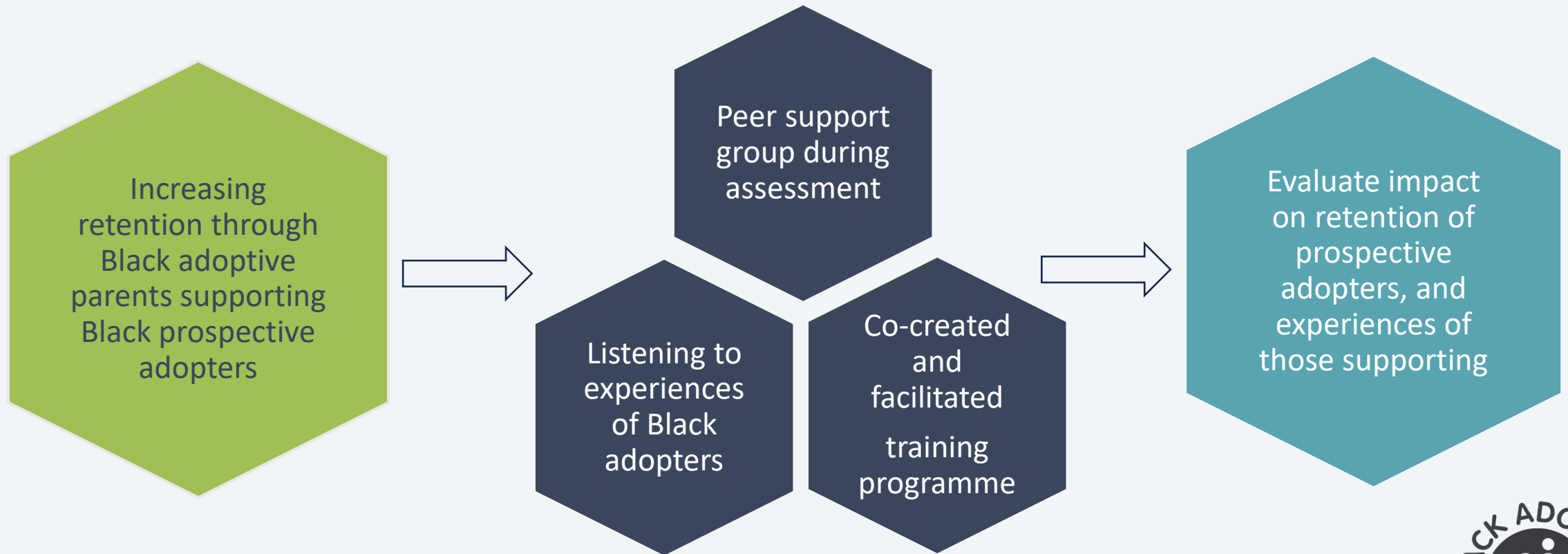
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Family finding journey research



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Prospective adopter retention pilot



Key learning so far...



Value diverse lived experience – listen, remunerate, build relationships



Think sustainability – funding, place-based to scale, inter-system learning



Find root causes – systems, power dynamics and hoarding, policies, unknowns



Be real – skill, resource and ambition



Tackle racism – do non-Eurocentrism, complexity/tensions, non-linearity

Sign up to our mailing list!



Thank you

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- Ayakwa, k. (2023) [Social work leaders must take action to embed anti-racist practice, conference told](#). Community Care Online.
- Brown, L., Solarin. A, and Charles, K (2021) [Opportunities and Support for Black Safeguarding Professionals](#). KIJJI; Gurau, O., & Bacchoo, A. (2022). Anti Racism Report. What Works Centre for Children's Social Care, Social Work England, PSW Network.