**Considering *DIVERSITY* in Assessments and Planning Interventions**

This document has been created to support practitioners to think about how we evidence the diversity of the children and families we work with. Capturing a child and family’s diverse needs in a way that is accurate, reflective of their situation and meaningful from assessment through to intervention delivery can be challenging to practitioners (*theme identified through the audit schedule 2021).* Without this detail however, we jeopardise overlooking indicators of risk, and steps to achieving positive outcomes for our families.

***What is the ethnic population of Buckinghamshire?***

* 86.4% White
* 8.6% Asian/Asian British
* 5.3% Other White groups
* 2.4% Mixed/multiple ethnic group
* 2.1% Black British/Caribbean/African.
* 0.5% Other ethnic group

*(Data taken from 2011 census. Further information can be found here:* [*https://www.healthandwellbeingbucks.org/Resources/Councils/Buckinghamshire/Documents/JSNA/3.4%20Protected%20characteristics.pdf*](https://www.healthandwellbeingbucks.org/Resources/Councils/Buckinghamshire/Documents/JSNA/3.4%20Protected%20characteristics.pdf) *2021 census data not currently available. Data will be updated on this prompt as soon as it is available)*

Often, the ‘*Identity’* section of a child assessment is narrow in scope and only defines a child or their family by their, religion, race, gender, disability etc… What is not usually present in assessments is the detail that captures and reflects ‘***who’*** the child is beyond their name.

***What is meant by Identity?*** Identity is who we are, our name, how we choose to define who we are, how others define us, and these definitions are often not the same. More importantly what and who are behind the name/person. The way we think/view ourselves, the way we are viewed by the world and the characteristics that define us e.g. our qualities, beliefs, self-image, personality, looks and/or uniqueness that make up individuals or a group.

Gaining insights into cultures not familiar to us is interesting, but it can also be very challenging. Family’s lived experiences and culture can often impact the way they see services and the support offered (particularly if through family generations there has been social care involvement). Gaining meaningful insight into an individual’s culture requires practitioners to understand the importance of class, discrimination, and poverty and how these factors play a role in our understanding of other cultures. When we start to work with a new family, we should never assume we know about them and ‘put them in boxes’. What is important is to respect their experiences and find out more about what we don’t know; this sometimes requires practitioners to look inwardly at their own values and biases; conscious and unconscious.

The Social GRACES (*concept developed by John Burnham, 1993*) is an acronym / mnemonic explaining the visible and invisible aspects of our identity. It allows us to examine the elements of identity that might impact our lives and behaviours. The Social GRACES is not a theory but a framework for understanding aspects of identity and how they shape our practices. It incorporates aspects of identity and asks practitioners to be aware of how *their identity* influences their thinking.

The social GRACES is defined below:

**G** – Gender, Gender Identity, Geography, Generation

**R** – Race, Religion

**A** – Age, Ability, Appearance

**C** – Class, Culture, Caste

**E** – Education, Ethnicity, Economicscan

**S** – Spirituality, Sexuality, Sexual Orientation

***What is meant by Culture?*** Culture is the way of life of an individual, group of people and how they do things. This includes values, behaviours, customs, cuisine, and other characteristics shared by groups of people. Some cultures place significant value on things such as ceremonial artefacts objects e.g. Christmas trees – but that is not identity - that is considered ceremonial or cultural objects. Clothing can form part of sub-cultures e.g. post code gangs can sometimes be identified in this way.

It is important that we understand from children and their family’s how they define their ethnicityand not make assumptions based in their race. We work with families that come from a mixture of backgrounds from various countries and ancestral roots outside of England. Individuals can identify with multiple ethnicities linked to their family ancestry and its origins. Ethnicity encompasses everything from; religion, culture, language to nationality; this enables people to take on multiple ethnicities and it therefore it is important we understand this to understand our families the best we can.

Genograms are visual tool that shows a family tree and is used to give a pictorial representation of a family system. More often, we complete genograms that detail only biological members of the family, however, completing a ***cultural genogram*** allows us to look beyond this and at the wider network around the child and family including understanding the role of family friends and peer relationships. Early identification of who is important in the child and family’s network can also support with safety planning and planning Family Group Conferences (FGC).

**What is meant by Ethnicity?** Ethnicity is the way we identify ourselves, e.g. - African, Caribbean, Black British, Asian, European, White English, White other. Ethnicity refers to shared cultural, characteristics such as language, practices, beliefs, and traditions linked to family’s ancestry.

When completing an assessment, it is crucial that a child and family’s needs are accurately reflected and considered. Are you aware of any protected characteristics for the family that need to be taken into consideration? Please consider the following when gathering information as part of the assessment process to capture meaningful information for the ‘Identity’ domain and support your analysis of the family’s needs:

|  |  |
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| ***Suggested line of enquiry….*** | ***What you want to know….*** |
| I’m interested to know more about you and who you are...(also consider completing *3 islands* or any other age appropriate tools on tri.x under the ‘Direct Tools’ heading: [Local Resources (proceduresonline.com)](https://www.proceduresonline.com/buckinghamshire/chservices/local_resources.html)) | How the child sees themselves – what they are interested in, what they like, dislike etc |
| If you had to describe yourself in 3 words, which 3 words would you choose? | How the child sees themselves using 3 specific words that can be further explored |
| How would you describe your role in your family…? | Dynamics within the family home between family members |
| What matters to you…? | The child’s value base – what/who is important to them |
| How do you think other people see you…? What 3 words do you think someone else would use to describe you? | How they think others see them and their personality/values/beliefs. |
| How would you describe your role amongst your friends? | How the child sees themselves amongst the personalities within their friendship circles. |
| What does your religion mean to you…? What do you believe in? | The child’s value base and their understanding of their religion within their family and wider |
| Are there any special days you celebrate? What do you and your family do on these days…? | What is important in the child’s world and how they celebrate with their family |
| Who are the important people to you in your life that you have special relationships with that do not live with you at home? | Important people in the child’s life outside of the child’s home (also consider completing an *eco map – see links below*)  |
| How would you describe your strengths? What are you good at? | What the child is good at and what they believe are their strengths |
| How do you manage when you find something challenging or hard work? | How the child manages in difficult situations |
| What do you want to do in the future? | The child’s thoughts as to their future aspirations, hopes |

When gathering the child’s voice, demonstrating an honest desire to want to understand the child and who they are supports in building trusting relationships. We need to understand who the children we are working with in the context of their environments. Always remember to ask open ended questions as this supports dialogue remaining fluid and minimises one-word answers.

*How do we use this information in assessments to support our analysis?*

The information gathered will support in forming individualised plans for children that have considered their voice and what and who is important to them in their world. Whilst research informs us of the overall impact of childhood trauma; we must always remember everyone has different needs and to support our families in a meaningful way, we need to know what makes families ‘***who’*** they are.

When planning interventions for families, we must understand the family’s individual needs in and reflect this in the child’s plan (including CP, CIN, Safety plans, rehabilitation plans and any other plans where relevant). When creating plans with families; we should always consider (list is not exhaustive):

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| ***Things we need to consider when creating plans…*** |
| The child’s voice | Language used to describe and reflect the child/family’s background and current circumstances including: race, culture, and ethnicity |
| Are there any religious days that need to be observed? | Any protected characteristics that need to be considered within the family? |
| Significant birthdays/anniversaries/events within the family or religion based (consider all family members in blended families or shared care arrangements) | If English is not the first language of the family, what specific interpreter do they require? Does the plan need to be translated to be fully understood? Do not assume translation by another whose language appears ‘better’ is always an accurate translation. |
| The input of significant others outside of the family home. | Does the child or any family members have any additional needs? |

It is important we do not use ‘labels’ or diagnosis’ (e.g., ADHD, ASD) to define the children and the families we work with. We need to foster relationships with children and their family that allows us to get to know about them and understand them as individuals, who they are and what matters to them.

If you have any further questions or comments about how to capture a child and families diverse needs in your work (including: management oversight, assessments, case notes, plans) please have a further discussion with your line manager or a member of staff from the Practice Development Team.

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***Social GRACES -***

Further information on the Social GRACES please see link below:

<https://www.basw.co.uk/media/news/2020/jul/social-graces-practical-tool-address-inequality>

***Cultural Genograms -***

For further information about creating cultural genograms, please see link below:

[Using genograms in social work practice (researchinpractice.org.uk)](https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/news-views/2021/february/using-genograms-in-social-work-practice/)

***Eco Maps –***

For further information and templates to complete an eco map, please see links below:

[Ecomap Activity - Free Social Work Tools and Resources: SocialWorkersToolbox.com](http://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/ecomap-activity/)

<https://socialworkhaven.com/social-work-ecomaps/>

***Protected Characteristics*** –

For further information on protected characteristics, please see below:

<https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights>

***Tips for social workers on Cultural Competence:***

[https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2018/10/24/tips-social-workers-cultural-competence/](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.communitycare.co.uk%2F2018%2F10%2F24%2Ftips-social-workers-cultural-competence%2F&data=04%7C01%7Csharlene.knight1%40buckinghamshire.gov.uk%7Cf3749daaa65045fa9b6a08d9828d7231%7C7fb976b99e2848e180861ddabecf82a0%7C0%7C0%7C637684366282934364%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=og%2FlX8DuJ%2Bgj2wHcoyzkqDLrrt5V7TQ4yrOVvDv7RFs%3D&reserved=0)