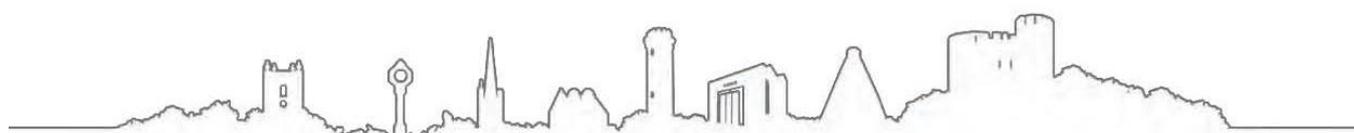


Cultural Competence in Assessments Practice Guidance



Children first and at the heart of all we do

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

March 2021

Cultural Competence in Assessments

This guidance is for all child and family practitioners undertaking assessments and care planning for children and families. This includes children in need, and children for whom there are child protection concerns. It is also relevant for children in care, taking in to account their cultural needs when considering their suitability for placements, and matching carers, and for staff in fostering and adoption.

What is Cultural Competence?

Culture is evidenced in human behaviour and relates to thoughts, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group.

Competence means having the capacity to practice effectively when working with families from any ethnic, religious or cultural background.

Culturally competent practice acknowledges and incorporates:

- The importance of every family's culture;
- The need for each worker to develop their cultural knowledge; and
- The development of services to meet culturally specific needs.



Cultural competence is a set of behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in, our policy and practice in children's social care, our practice in our team and our practice with other agencies and services.

Cultural Competence in Social Care Practice

There are five essential elements that promote cultural competence in social care practice. These include the ability to:

1. Value diversity and difference;
2. Be able to recognise how our own cultural identity impacts on others;
3. Be conscious of how cultures interact and the significance of this in statutory childcare practice;



Children first and at the heart of all we do

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

4. Develop cultural knowledge and understanding;
5. Contribute to the development of practice in our service that reflects an understanding of diversity between and within cultures .

Practice points around these elements

All practitioners should be aware of their cultural values and biases and how they impact on relationships (this should be explored through supervision, team meetings and ongoing training and development)

A culturally competent practitioner should understand the worldview and culture of a family. They should have specific knowledge of the cultural diversity of Dudley together with knowledge of relevant historical influences (e.g. the impact of war and social unrest in the country of origin). They should also recognise that different families from the same cultural/ religious group may have different beliefs and values. It is always important to ask children and family members what matters to them and not to make assumptions.



Practitioners should have specific skills and intervention techniques to provide an effective assessment and intervention service which recognises cultural factors in all families. This requires knowledge and understanding of families' cultural norms, how these influence attitudes to children and whether these accord with statutory child protection principles.

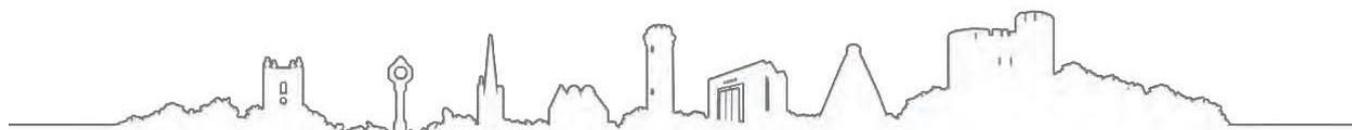
The Children Act 1989 requires that the welfare of the child is paramount and, whilst an understanding of the cultural context is necessary, this should not get in the way of measures to protect the child from significant harm.

People of different cultures live and work together. When seeking services and placements to support a child, the ability to meet the child's needs in the round, including cultural needs, should be the primary driver, rather than the need for a cultural, religious or ethnic match.

Child Protection and Cultural Difference

Significant harm to a child physically, emotionally, sexually or through neglect is wrong in any culture.

Cultural difference in the way families rear their children should be acknowledged and respected. However, it is not acceptable in any culture to allow a child to suffer significant harm. Where there is a



Children first and at the heart of all we do

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

cultural explanation given in relation to significant harm, the practitioner should discuss this with their Team Manager.

Thoughts to consider:

- Some cultures use a system of multiple caregivers throughout the first years of a child's life;
- Sleeping arrangements influence early parent-child relationships and may reflect cultural beliefs about infant social development ;
- Cultures have different ways of dealing with the need for dependence and independence. Socialisation methods differ across cultures;
- Assumptions and stereotypes associated with any ethnic or religious group must be reviewed;
- Asking questions, listening and observing are the basis of all assessments;
- Each person and family is unique.



Questions to help locate a family's cultural position:

- To what extent is the presenting behaviour and problems related to issues of social transition such as migration, lack of extended family support, discrimination etc?
- Are any behaviours linked to child protection concerns considered "acceptable" within the family's own culture?
- To what extent are any difficulties in the family a result of lack of access to or knowledge of appropriate resources?
- To what extent is the problem related to cultural conflict within the family around identity, values or relationships of individual members?
- Assessing child protection concerns where cultural issues may be a reason/ excuse (e.g. physical chastisement justified through beliefs about child rearing)
- Do the adults in the family see the concerns as a cultural norm?
- Do they want change?
- Does the child see the concerns as a cultural norm?
- Does the child want things to change?
- Does the community see the concerns as an acceptable cultural norm?
- Are there organisations/ people in the community trying to affect change in the family?
- Is there evidence that the concerns will cause significant harm to the child?



Children first and at the heart of all we do

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- Is there evidence that the concerns are illegal or outside of UK legal parameters?

All family assessments, intervention plans and contacts should include:

- Identification and analysis of a family's cultural identity and belief systems.
- An analysis of how this impacts on the family's ability to safeguard their children.
- An explicit link between the family's cultural beliefs and any child protection concerns. This requires analysis of the family's view of the concerns and whether these accord with wider cultural/ religious values about child up-bringing the family might have.
- An analysis of the family's engagement with children's social care and the degree of recognition of our concerns taking in to consideration gender and cultural factors.
- Identification of resources or approaches which are required to assess and respond to the safeguarding concerns in their cultural context. This might include the use of an interpreter, the involvement of a gender specific practitioner or the input from a representative of the family's cultural community.



Additional information;

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/children-race-racism-racial-bullying/>

https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/basw_14643-8_0.pdf

<https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2018/10/24/tips-social-workers-cultural-competence/>

<https://preemptivelove.org/blog/cultural-competence/>

<https://pcsp.libraries.rutgers.edu/index.php/pcsp/article/viewFile/906/2296>

