

## Embedding Cultural Competence in Safeguarding Practice

### 1. Introduction

This resource aims to provide a starting point for third sector organisations that want to explore and embed a culturally competent approach to safeguarding. It should be read in tandem with the *An Introduction to Cultural Competence in Safeguarding*.

### 2. What does a culturally competent organisation look like?

A culturally competent organisation will have staff and volunteers who understand their own cultural lens upon the world and are able to apply this as a tool to support people . They constantly explore their own cultural lens, are aware of their unconscious biases and, when they identify them, are able to use them as a tool for reflection and change. This will include when they interact with other cultures and within their own. The culturally competent worker will be aware of how their own cultural identity has changed over the years and what drove those changes.

There will also be cultural awareness within and at different levels in different parts of the organisation. How this plays out is something that will be explored regularly within the organisation.

A culturally competent organisation will use the positives within different cultures as a positive tool for change within their own service provision. As well as using cultures positively, a culturally competent organisation will recognise that cultures and communities are not homogenous and have group differences. There will be an awareness that other connecting characteristics such as sexuality, class and disability can make cultural competence challenging and will need constant exploration. Training will be made available, and where appropriate required, in topics such as equality, diversity, cultural sensitivity and unconscious bias.

A cultural focus needs to include the prevention and protection aspects of culture within organisations.

### 3. What issues do we need to be aware of?

The NSPCC has undertaken some work <sup>1</sup> on culture, faith and safeguarding cultures and has argued that workers need to be aware of these issues if they are to be regarded as culturally competent when working in safeguarding. They argue that workers need to:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/case-reviews/learning/culture-faith/>

- Understand social or cultural isolation or the fear of isolation
- Know where culture and belief can override self interest
- Understand cultural conflict in families
- Understand how religion and culture can be seen as a distraction from safeguarding
- Understand and address professional misconceptions, lack of competence and lack of knowledge
- Understand why children and young people developing their own identity can be seen as a cultural challenge
- Understand the impact of converting to a partner's religion
- Acknowledge the impact of a belief in spirit possession
- Understand the interplay between religion and mental health issues

## **The Sociology of Culture**

There are a number of sociological issues which need to be addressed if safeguarding is to be culturally competent. These will include:

- How safeguarding responds to service users who have No Recourse to Public Funds
- The Rights of third country nationals and safeguarding
- Who to talk to in a community when there are male gatekeepers
- How to respond to 'hidden women' and seldom heard communities
- The stigma for some groups using public services and not trusting the state
- Finding the way round the system
- Fear of the state/fear of social workers
- Using an interpreter
- Difference between forced and arranged marriage
- Caring roles

- Sexual exploitation
- Child rearing norms
- The role of patriarchy
- Cultural approaches to disability and mental health

#### 4. Tools for Exploring Cultural Competence

Some tools for exploring cultural competence in your organisation are shown below.

Community Tool Box, Is your organisation culturally competent?

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/culture/cultural-competence/culturally-competent-organizations/main>

Alternatively, you can explore the following:

[Cultural Competence self-assessment questionnaire](http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mason.pdf)

<http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mason.pdf>

[Conducting a Cultural Competence Self-Assessment](https://rmhpcommunity.org/sites/default/files/resource/Cultural%20Competence%20Self-Assessment.pdf)

<https://rmhpcommunity.org/sites/default/files/resource/Cultural%20Competence%20Self-Assessment.pdf>

#### 5. Conclusion

Cultural competence can be complex, but good training and supervision, will enable everyone within an organisation to explore, and be aware of, their values and beliefs.

Cultural competence allows us to be clear about the difference between fact and opinion. It supports us to do all we can to protect those who need protection and work towards a more equal society.

## Appendix A Resources

Acquiring Cultural Competence, Equalities and Successful safeguarding

<http://smp.eelga.gov.uk/documents/access/cultral%20diversity%20report%20sept%202014%20website.pdf>

### Activities to help you explore cultural competence

1. Undertake the unconscious bias questionnaire in relation to a group you feel positive about and one where you are less confident that you can work with them effectively. With a trusted colleague explore what this means for your practice. Develop an action plan which you can use with both groups.  
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>
2. Discuss with a colleague a family you are working with 1 where you believe no cultural bias exists 2 where it does. Explore your work from your perspective and that of the family. Are there any differences or similarities in each perspective on the key issues for the family and you as the worker? How can these be addressed?
3. From a cultural perspective explore a knowledge area that you need to develop your understanding of. Identify 5 resources which will help you. Following your engagement with the resources develop an action plan to increase your learning. Review it in six months and see what difference it has made to your practice.

Examples of some issues could be

- Home schooling
- FGM
- Spirit possession
- Private fostering
- Male circumcision

Share your work with your colleagues

4. Identify some key lessons from a practice review where culture was an issue. Identify the learning and how this impact upon your practice. Review in six months what the learning has been on you.
5. Reflect on a piece of culturally competent practice which you observed. Write it up and reflect on what was good about it and how it could be improved.

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