Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership

Cultural Literacy in Safeguarding

Cultural literacy in safeguarding practice with adults and children enables individuals and systems to intervene respectfully and effectively to safeguard people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognises the relevance of identity, culture and lived experience, and values all individuals, families and communities. It requires curiosity, openness, and humility.

In the Briefing:

- **Safeguarding Through a Rights-Based Lens**
- **Intersectionality**
- **Diverse Community**
- **Adultification**

- **Learning from Practice**
- **Race and Culture in Mental Health**
- **Resources**

Safeguarding Through a Rights-Based Lens

Cultural literacy includes the confidence to intervene to safeguard children and adults where it is needed. Sometimes practitioners find it difficult to challenge practices that are seen as cultural, or based on faith or belief.

Human Rights Act 1998

UNCRC

Approaching safeguarding decisions through a rights-based lens, with reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Act can help to focus the mind on when 'cultural' practices, or those based on faith and belief, pose a risk to children and vulnerable adults and require a safeguarding response.

Intersectionality

This concept extends our understanding of cultural literacy to include an understanding and awareness of how one aspect of identity, such as ethnicity, can interact with other aspects of identity such as gender, disability, sexual orientation or class. For example, a black man with serious mental illness may face discrimination due to both his ethnicity and disability. Being curious and open to the realities of people's lived experience is hugely important to identifying and addressing intersectional disadvantages people face and how this affects their safeguarding needs.

Listen Up are committed to embedding intersectionality and systemic thinking into child safeguarding practice through research and making knowledge and best practice guidance available to practitioners

A Diverse Community

In 2021 the Office of National Statistics undertook the population Census. This found that there are 305,900 people in the Borough.

The analysis of census data helps to inform how we plan for culturally literate services, now and in the future. It also provides a snapshot of interesting facts and figures that help us to understand a wide range of information about the local community.

1.3% of people are of Bangladeshi heritage

18.7% of people are of Indian heritage

5.2% of people are of African heritage

1.9% of people are of Caribbean heritage

0.2 % of people are of Gypsy or Irish Traveller heritage

1.8% of people are of Irish heritage

4.3% of people are of mixed or multiple heritage

1.5% of people are of Arab heritage

In 2021, our population was:

- **33.3% Asian: Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese & Other**
- **7.9% Black: African, Caribbean & Other**
- **4.3% Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups**
- **6.3% Other ethnic group: Arab and Other**
- **48.2% White: British, Irish, Gypsy, Roma, Irish Traveller & Other**

You can find more detailed information by clicking on the census image above

census 2021

Adultification

Adultification is a form of bias where children, particularly from global majority ethnic backgrounds, are perceived as being more adult-like and less vulnerable than others their age. This results in people underestimating the protection and support they need. Adultification significantly impacts black children and dual heritage children who are more often identified as threatening and responsible for their actions, rather than being identified as children who require support.

If professionals view some global majority children, particularly black children, with a preconception of being more like an adult due to factors such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class their rights and safeguarding needs as children could be overlooked and unmet.

Children who are 'adultified' are at greater risk of harm, because they are perceived as being more responsible for their actions and more able to protect themselves than they really are.

What can help?

- Critical thinking and reflection is important when considering individual bias and the impact on safeguarding practice

- Acknowledgement that racial stereotypes and racism about global ethnic communities exists and can be present in services that are supposed to protect and safeguard children and adults.

- Critical challenge and safe reflective spaces for all professionals to engage in uncomfortable conversations about discrimination and racism.

- Review and consider language when writing and communicating about global majority children. Do not use words such as 'aggressive', 'mature' and 'street wise'. Describe the behaviour and the context in which it occurred. Language used may influence perception of the need for a safeguarding response.

- Remain curious and consider professional challenge when a child is being adultified and vulnerability is being replaced with culpability.

- Use a child first and safeguarding approach, where the welfare of the child is always paramount. Try using the terminology 'child' instead of 'young person' to think about the child and their individual needs.

- Consider how personal bias can affect decision making and safeguarding practice. If the gender or ethnicity of the child changed would your responses remain the same?

Resources and further reading:

Adultification bias within child protection and safeguarding

Boys to men: the cost of 'adultification' in safeguarding responses to Black boys

Jahnine Davis
Co-Founder and Director, Listen Up
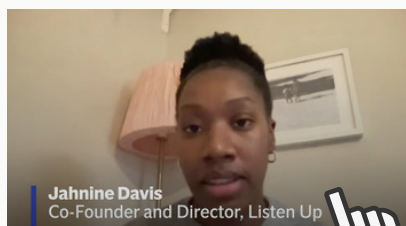
NSPCC Learning

Research in Practice have developed this tool to help you reflect on existing levels of cultural literacy in teams and organisations, and consider the barriers that inhibit diversity-related discussions. It can be used to think about individual behaviours and attitudes, and to reflect on wider team and organisational dynamics, policies and structures, with an emphasis on action planning to advance cultural literacy.

The term 'cultural competence' is outdated and we are choosing not to use it anymore and instead using 'cultural literacy'. Though the content of the practice tool still has value.

Whilst the focus is on social work teams, the tool is relevant across all frontline services.

PSDP—Resources and Tools:
Developing cultural competence

Learning from Practice

The importance of cultural literacy has been highlighted in local and national reviews of safeguarding practice.

Victoria Climbie

A lack of cultural literacy in the individuals and services responding to child safeguarding concerns or Victoria Climbie was found by the enquiry into her death. Abusive behaviours were obscured or minimised by concepts of "cultural norms".

THE VICTORIA CLIMBIÉ INQUIRY

"...one of the consequences of an exclusive focus on 'culture' in work with black children and families, is [that] it leaves black and ethnic minority children in potentially dangerous situations, because the assessment has failed to address a child's fundamental care and protection needs."

Ratna Dutt, director, Race Equality Unit, Laming enquiry (2003)

Child Q, City and Hackney Child Safeguarding Partnership

In 2020, Child Q, a Black female child of secondary school age, was 'strip searched' by female police officers. The search took place on school premises, without an Appropriate Adult present.

chscp
Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review
Child Q
March 2022
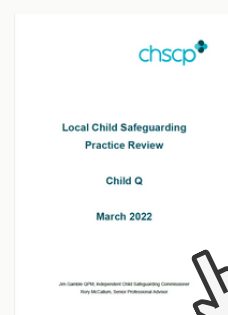
"Having considered the context of the incident, the views of those engaged in the review and the impact felt by Child Q and her family, racism (whether deliberate or not) was likely to have been an influencing factor in the decision to undertake a strip search."

Domestic Homicide Review "O"

Cultural values and attitudes to family, shame and honour can be a barrier to disclosure and help seeking in the context of domestic abuse. O was from a South Asian community and she was apprehensive about bringing shame on her family and on her community if she spoke out about domestic abuse.

There are intersectional barriers to seeking and receiving help for domestic abuse faced by older people, particularly those with care and support needs, and people from global majority ethnic groups. Being female also significantly increases risk. Analysing how these factors can layer and reinforce one another leads to a better understanding of risk.

Evelyn Safeguarding Adults Review
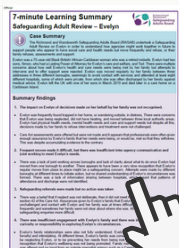
There was no evidence of overt discrimination against Evelyn or her sons in the evidence analysed. However, her son had complained, after Evelyn had left the country, that enquiries into her circumstances were racially motivated. It is important to be mindful of how past experiences of racism might impact on perceptions of the motivations of professionals.

Kamil Safeguarding Adults Review

Kamil was murdered by a fellow resident in supported accommodation. Both men had significant mental health needs. Kamil had suffered repeated abuse from the fellow resident and the abuse appeared to be explicitly racist in content.

"Hate crime assessments should recognise the increased risk when victims of hate crime live within the same provision as a perpetrator. Perpetrator/s of hate crime using language such as 'paedophile' or 'terrorist' should be warning signs of increased risk to victims"

Race and Culture in Mental Health Care

In the UK, Black British people are more likely to be diagnosed with psychosis, to encounter inpatient mental health services and to be detained under the Mental Health Act than White people.

It is important that we understand the impact of racism on mental health, and the impact of cultural literacy on the way that mental health care is delivered.

Mind have produced a resource which promotes cultural literacy through topics including:

- **Talking about race and racism, including definitions of institutional and interpersonal racism,**
- **White privilege and microaggressions.**
- **How racism can affect mental health**
- **Ways to support mental health**
- **Racism in the mental health system**
- **Overcoming barriers to getting support**
- **A list of useful contacts if racism is affecting mental health**

Mind have produced this video to illustrate the lived experience of racism within mental health care.

"When they look at me they don't see Colin... they see a catalogue of Black men who come off this stereotype of being big and dangerous and angry."

Resources to Support Practice

Watch this account of the lived experience of being branded a witch as a child.

Kindoki a kind of witchcraft or possession by evil spirits

Working With Interpreters on the Frontline

NSPCC briefing: Culture and Faith: Learning from Case Reviews

Culture and faith: learning from case reviews

RACE EQUALITY MATTERS

A UK-wide collaboration of thousands of organisations and millions of employees creating change to achieve Race Equality in our workplaces.

SEEN

We are Seen. Improving outcomes for children and young people of African, Asian and Caribbean heritage.

Discriminatory abuse: a briefing for practitioners

Local Government Association

NSPCC

Talking to children about racism