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Background

Cultural competence means offering & delivering safeguarding services in an equitable, fair, and non-discriminatory manner.

It is a set of cognitive, behavioural and linguistic skills which lead to effective communication with people of other cultures.

Practitioners, organisations and systems should understand, communicate and effectively interact with people from all diverse backgrounds, in a way that recognises, supports, and values the worth of individuals, families & communities, and protects & preserves the dignity of children, young people, vulnerable adults and families they work with.

Culture can be seen as beliefs, ideologies, customs, world views and values common to a group of people which denotes their individual & social behaviour and has evolved over time.

Culture is not the same as ethnicity. Culture is specific to an individual, ethnicity denotes the origin and membership of a group of people linked for example by language or nationality.

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Why it matters

Cultural competence enhances communication by bridging language barriers, understanding nonverbal cues, and adapting communication styles to suit different contexts.

It builds trust & relationships, challenges stereotypes & biases and offers more personalised care, which can lead to better outcomes.

Practitioners and their practice should be person-centred, unbiased, accessible to all and legally compliant.

Cultural competence does not mean ignoring or excusing practices that are against UK law or could cause or risk causing significant harm to children, young people and adults.

By learning about other cultures, we recognize the richness of human diversity and avoid making assumptions based on limited information.

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Information

The [NSPCC briefing Culture and faith: learning from case reviews](#) highlights, lack of understanding of religion and cultural context of families can lead professionals to overlooking situations that may put family members at risk, whilst the desire to be culturally sensitive can lead professionals to accept lower standards of care.

It is important not to prejudge or second guess people's cultural practices. Instead, it is more beneficial to be professionally curious, ask families about their views, practices & beliefs and talk with colleagues, specialists & a range of cultural groups.

Language, cultural variations and different approaches will help develop engaging relationships with families.

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Models

We can learn from various cultural competence models:

Aspects of the [Tedam's Mandela learning cycle](#):

- make time,
- acknowledge needs,
- differences,
- educational experiences,
- life experiences
- age.

Tedam notes a central strategy for disrupting unconscious bias is taking time to listen, learn and develop knowledge and skills. If timing and duration of meetings are only defined by practitioner schedules, it is likely that the family's priorities, habits and customs are likely to go unrecognised and undervalued.

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[The Social GRRRAACCEEESSS and LUUUUTT model](#) introduces exercises and activities which can be used to explore the different aspects of the model within whole team meetings and individual supervisions.

These activities are designed to help teams understand how everyone has different experiences of power or powerlessness, and that people's views can be influenced by the Social GRRRAACCEEESSS.

Practitioners need to consider how Social GRRRAACCEEESSS impact their understanding of and approaches to all service users.

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What to do

Cultural competence can be improved through training, education and experience.

Value people's identity, experiences, expertise and self-determination.

Maintain awareness about national and local ethnic, social and religious demographics and how these are changing.

Spend time getting to know service users. Adopt a position of not knowing and be ready to learn from service users – they are the experts of their experiences.

Be self-aware of the impact of your own personal cultural values & beliefs on your practice.

Be flexible when using existing frameworks and tools.

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Questions to consider

Useful Resources:

[The Social GRRRAACCEEESSS and LUUUUTT model](#)

[Tedam's Mandela learning cycle](#)

[NSPCC briefing Culture and faith: learning from case reviews](#)

[NSPCC: Safeguarding children who come from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities](#)

[CQC: Culturally appropriate care](#)

