



## Pan Berkshire Children Policy & Procedures

### Equality and Diversity Policy

#### Introduction

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1. The population of the regions covered by the four Berkshire Safeguarding Children Partnerships is multi-cultural. In order to make sensitive and informed professional judgements about a child's needs and parents' capacity to respond to their child's needs, it is important that professionals are sensitive to differing family patterns and lifestyles and to child rearing patterns that vary across different racial, ethnic and cultural groups.
2. Professionals should also be aware of the broader social factors that serve to discriminate against ethnic minorities. The assessment process should always include consideration of the way religious beliefs and cultural traditions in different racial, ethnic and cultural groups influence their values, attitudes and behaviour and the way in which family and community life is structured and organised.
3. Professionals should guard against myths and stereotypes, both positive and negative, but anxiety about being accused of racist practice should not prevent the necessary action being taken to safeguard a child.

#### Principles

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The four Berkshire Safeguarding Children Partnerships and their agencies are committed to promoting equal opportunities and valuing diversity in all its functions, roles and services it provides. The regions covered by these Partnerships are multi-racial, multi-religious, multi-language and multi-cultural. All our policies, procedures, practice and services should positively acknowledge, reflect and respect this fact.

This means the four Berkshire Safeguarding Children Partnerships and their agencies will:

- Work to achieve social justice and inclusion that enables all children and their families to have equality of opportunity;
- Oppose and prevent discrimination, victimisation or harassment against any of the eleven characteristics of equality (nine characteristics required by the Equality Act 2010 and two adopted by local partnerships to reflect local needs);
- Treat all citizens fairly and with respect;
- Recognise the rights of individuals to participate fully in the social and economic life.

#### Eight Strands of Diversity

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There are eight characteristics to this Diversity Policy which the four Berkshire Safeguarding Children Partnerships and their agencies are committed to adhere to:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender / gender identity;
- Marriage & Civil Partnerships;
- Pregnancy & Maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or Belief;
- Sexual Orientation;

Section 149 of the Equality Act (2010) requires the following provisions to be made by agencies (public sector bodies) for their employees and service users:

- Eliminate any discrimination, victimisation or harassment;
- Advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

Working Together to Safeguard Children outlines two key principles that underpin effective safeguarding arrangements and services: that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; and the need for agencies to have a child-centred approach in their safeguarding work.

The following six competencies can be used as a framework for effective safeguarding practice:

- Child Development – knowing how a healthy child presents or behaves so that signs of distress and impaired development can be identified as early as possible (Level 1 of the Continuum of Need and Response Framework);
- Listening to the child and taking what they say seriously, including communication with the child (and family) in their preferred language;
- Good holistic assessments that address all the principles and the three assessment domains in the Assessment Protocol, and take account of the Borough's Risk Sensible Model;
- Awareness of the local and statutory protected characteristics so that in undertaking an assessment and providing services, due regard is given to what is prohibited, and what requires promotion, under the Equality Act (2010) and Human Rights Act (1998);

- Knowing, learning about or seeking expert advice on a particular protected characteristic by which the child and family lives their daily lives; and
- Knowing about local services (depending on the type of protected characteristic maybe even regional or national services) that are available to provide relevant input into prevention, support and rehabilitation services for the child (and their family).

Agencies must have essential safeguards in place to promote the welfare of children, particularly those vulnerable due to their protected characteristics not being effectively assessed and met:

- Children should feel valued and respected with their self-esteem promoted;
- Agencies should recognise that needs *within* each protected characteristic will not be uniform and attention needs to be given to the specific needs of the child and family;
- Staff should recognise the importance of ascertaining the wishes and feelings of children and their families including their preferred means of communication and language interpretation needs;
- That staff are trained and have access to resources to help them identify and assess vulnerabilities that can arise from not meeting the needs relating to protected characteristics of a child and/or their family;
- Providing access to services for specific groups of children that can promote their different needs;
- That agencies should fully understand the communities they serve and the needs and challenges in terms of safeguarding that these communities may have and how services will have to be delivered to promote welfare; and
- Complaints and comments procedures are clear, effective, user-friendly and accessible.

### Institutional Racism

1. Children from ethnic minorities (and their parents) are likely to have experienced harassment, racial discrimination and institutional racism. Although racism can cause **Significant Harm**, it is not, in itself, a category of abuse. The experience of racism is likely to affect the responses of the child and family to assessment and **Section 47 Enquiry** processes. Failure to consider the effects of racism undermines efforts to protect children from other forms of Significant Harm.
2. The effects of racism differ for different communities and individuals and should not be assumed to be uniform. Attention should be given to the specific needs of children of mixed parentage and refugee children. In particular, the need for neutral, high-quality, gender-appropriate translation or interpretation services should be taken into account when working with children and families whose preferred language is not English.
3. All organisations working with children, including those operating in areas where black and minority ethnic communities are numerically small, should address institutional racism, defined in the **Macpherson Inquiry Report (2000)** on Stephen Lawrence as 'the collective failure by an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people on account of their race, culture and/or religion'.