



## **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-racial, multi-religious, multi-lingual and 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 protected characteristics referenced in the Equality Act 2010; Further additional characteristics have been adopted by the Local Authorities in the partnership. Details are provided locally where this applies.
- Treat all citizens fairly and with respect;
- Recognise the rights of individuals to participate fully in the social and economic life.

The four Berkshire Safeguarding Children Partnerships and their agencies are committed to adhere to the following protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and civil partnership;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual orientation.

Section 149 of the Equality Act (2010), the public sector equality duty, 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 2023

Working together to Safeguard Children 2023 states that successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working between parents/carers and the practitioners working with them. Practitioners should take a child-centred approach to meeting the needs of the whole family.

The guidance outlines that assessments should recognise and respect the individual and protected characteristics of families, including the ways in which these can overlap and intersect, ensuring support reflects their diversity of needs and experiences

The guidance also outlines that it is expected of strategic leaders to create an inclusive culture where diversity is understood, and multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working is celebrated.

The four Berkshire Safeguarding Children Partnerships and their agencies commit to an inclusive approach, where understanding and responding to diverse needs of children and their families is central in all the work that we do. In practice this means:

- Having a clear understanding of child development, and 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 communicating with the child (and family) in their preferred language;
- Conducting good holistic assessments that address all the principles and the three assessment domains in the Assessment Protocol,
- Being aware 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 live 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).
- Being aware of intersectionality, that is, recognising that people may belong to more than one group and can face multiple discrimination

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. Agencies should ensure that:

- Children feel valued and respected with their self-esteem promoted;
- they 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 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;
- They provide access to services for specific groups of children that can promote their different needs;
- they 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.

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 of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin'.

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