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Background

Cultural competence means offering & delivering safeguarding services in a way that is fair to everyone. It is the responsibility of individuals & organisations and is where individuals and systems respond effectively & respectfully to people of all cultures, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, as well as other diversity factors in a way that recognises, supports, and values the worth of individuals, families & communities, and protects & preserves the dignity of each young person and family 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. It is based on values, ideas, perceptions & meanings which have evolved over time. Culture is not the same as ethnicity. Culture is specific to an individual, whereas 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 competency allows practitioners to practice effectively. Practitioners and their practice should be person-centred, unbiased, accessible to all and legally compliant.

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

The [NSPCC briefing Culture and faith: learning from case reviews](#) highlights that a lack of understanding of religions 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 result in professionals accepting lower standards of care.

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Information

It is important not to prejudge or second guess people's cultural practices. Instead it is more beneficial to be professionally curious and ask families about their views, practices and beliefs, talk with colleagues, specialists and a range of cultural groups. Language, cultural variations and different approaches should be considered when developing effective and engaging relationships with families. Therefore all agencies must be able to understand, respect and work effectively with individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

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Models

There are different cultural competence models we can learn from.

[Tedam's Mandela learning cycle](#) looks at different areas; make time, acknowledge, needs, differences, educational experiences, life experiences and age. Tedam notes that 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

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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](#)

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What to do

- 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 by thinking about the impact of your own personal cultural values and beliefs on your practice.
- Be flexible, particularly when using existing frameworks and tools.

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unrecognised and undervalued.

[The Social GRRRAACCEEESSS and LUUUUTT model](#) introduces different exercises and activities which can be used to explore the different aspects of the model within whole teams and 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. Therefore practitioners need to consider how Social GRRRAACCEEESSS impact their understanding of and approaches to all service users.

