

7-minute briefing: Cultural Literacy

Think culture in everything we do and celebrate our diverse communities

Date: July 2024

1

C – Cultural heritage and values – why does this matter? Being culturally literate ensures we're able to understand and embrace the traditions, heritage, values and faiths from cultures within our communities. To strengthen practice in relation to culture and identity in Surrey, we should ensure cultural literacy is embedded in ALL family work across partner agencies and when making safeguarding decisions. We should also be mindful that taking a [Surrey Healthy Schools](#) approach is central to the Surrey's emotional wellbeing and Mental health strategy.

2

U – Understanding different cultures' behaviours and practices. Practitioners do not need to be cultural experts or understand the intricacies of different faiths and beliefs, but should be curious, open minded, and unassuming. Be confident to ask searching questions and if there is a safeguarding concern, challenge. Cultural practices do not supersede safeguarding. Build relationships that are rooted in openness and honesty and have a holistic view of the families, ensuring professional curiosity whilst maintaining a trusting relationship. [Professional Curiosity](#)

3

L – Listen. Surrey schools have over 140 spoken languages in addition to English. It is best practice to use an independent translator with all communications but particularly where there are safeguarding concerns. Apps and telephone lines are available to ensure translation offered is independent. Consider contacting the [Race equality and minority achievement \(REMA\)](#) team at SCC or Inclusion Health team, Children and Family Health Surrey fchc.inclusionhealth@nhs.net for further advice.

4

T - Take Time to understand traditions, be curious and ask questions so that you gain the confidence and knowledge of how to appropriately respond to those who may not share your values or beliefs. If you're unsure how to respond to a parent or carer, seek clarification from them, listen and then reply. Consider if there is someone with further knowledge you could obtain support and understanding from. Be aware of how your own cultural values may impact on your judgement and decision making when working with families from other cultures.

5

U – Unconscious Bias. Unconscious bias is when we make judgements or decisions on the basis of our prior experiences. All of us are affected by biases which can cloud our decision making if we have no awareness of this. It is important to ensure we develop self-awareness around our biases and the very act of realising we have hidden biases can help us to monitor and ameliorate it. We must question cultural stereotypes and ensure peer to peer challenge is embedded into practice.

6

R - Respecting cultural integrity. Be open to all characteristics, protected and otherwise and support colleagues to provide the best support for families. Recognise historical differences and provide a holistic and open approach. Consider gender roles and expectations within the family's cultural dynamic and understand the family history. Ensure assessments are supportive and respectful of family culture but robust with escalating any safeguarding concerns.

7

E – Empathy. Put children and young people first and see things from their point of view; Recognise inequalities and discrimination; Respect their voice, experience, expertise and response to trauma; Be curious and approach parents and carers with empathy and as partners, wherever possible. Be culturally respectful, whilst mindful of safeguarding concerns. Please refer to your Ethnic, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) policies and check for any upcoming training within your organisation, or on offer with your community.