



Guidance for promoting equalities in early years and childcare

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1. Introduction

Responsibilities in Early Years and Childcare

Early Years and Childcare settings which are directly run or maintained by the local education authority, are bound by the general and specific duties for a public authority.

Voluntary, independent and private early years and childcare settings/services do not have the same statutory duty as public authorities. However, the principles of equity and justice underpinning the law should be applied by all settings as good practice. Furthermore where the provision is overseen, coordinated or advised by the local early years and childcare service (Which, as indicated above, has public authority membership), the local authority will have responsibility to ensure the duties are fulfilled.

2. What is an Equality Policy?

All childcare settings should have an equality policy in place to ensure their setting communicates effectively to the many different families within their local area. This policy should outline how you consider equality in every aspect of your childcare business in order to avoid discrimination. It should show your Aims, details of the Equalities Act legislation and what Methods you use to ensure equality.

Example of an equality policy

Your statement of intent

Our setting is committed to anti-discriminatory practice for all children and families. We respect and value the diversity which exists in the wider community. We are committed to challenging attitudes that promote discrimination, ensuring respect for all and preparing all children for life in a diverse society.

Your aim:

We aim to:

- Ensure that all children and adults are encouraged and able to achieve their full potential.
- Respect and value differences between people.
- Prepare children for life in a diverse society.
- Acknowledge the existence of prejudice and take steps to prevent it.
- Make our environment a place where everyone feels welcomed and valued.
- Improve our knowledge and understanding of beliefs, cultures and disabilities.
- Access staff training when the opportunities arise.

The legal framework for this policy is:

The Equalities Act 2010.

Legislation to provide protection against discrimination for people who share the following protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion and belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual Orientation

Your methods:

Admissions:

Our setting is open to all members of the community:

- We welcome all families equally.
- We advertise our service in the community and support families for whom English is an additional language.
- We reflect the diversity of members of our society in our publicity and promotional materials.
- We provide information in clear, concise language, whether in spoken or written form.
- Where possible we provide information in languages of our community.
- We do not discriminate against any children, parents or carers on any grounds.
- We ensure that all parents and carers are made aware of our equalities policy.

Employment:

- We are an equal opportunity employer; posts are advertised and all participants are judged against explicit and fair criteria.
- All job descriptions include a commitment to equality and diversity as part of their specifications.
- We will consider positive action when recruiting to posts, to attract people from under-represented groups into our workforce.

Training:

- We seek out training opportunities for staff and volunteers to enable them to develop practices which enable all children to flourish.
- We review our practices to ensure that we are fully implementing our equalities policy.
- We ensure that all staff have an understanding and knowledge of equality and diversity, and the characteristics of protected groups.

General:

- Every member of staff is responsible for diversity; however we will have a named member of staff responsible for leading on equality.
- We encourage parents to share skills with staff and children.
- We handle questions about difference honestly, sensitively and openly.
- We develop an equality action plan to ensure that everyone is included.
- We treat everyone with respect and with consideration of their diversity.
- We provide a welcoming atmosphere with approachable staff.
- We offer children a secure environment in which to explore their own culture and that of their peers.
- We actively seek ways to counter the learning of negative attitudes and behaviour towards differences.
- We check that our resources reflect diversity and do not promote negative stereotypes.

2.1 Guidance for Good Practice

The following steps need to become part of your everyday routine and practice.

You should:

- Examine all your existing policies, procedures and practices and assess whether they promote equality.
- Devise a strategy to evaluate the impact of all you do on all children and their families in the area and whether they might disadvantage families from particular groups.
- Take advice and support from the local authority and attend all relevant training.
- Ensure that all your practitioners understand the law and its importance.
- Examine all your policies, practices and procedures to ensure there is no discrimination on any grounds.
- Ensure that everyone in your setting is equally valued, treated with equal respect and concern, and that the needs of each individual are addressed.
- Ensure that each child and family has equal access and entitlement to all available opportunities for learning, experiences and resources.
- Develop positive attitudes and behaviour to all people, whether they are different from or similar to themselves.
- Value aspects of other people's lives equally.
- Ensure the needs of every child and adult are identified and addressed and that everyone shares an ethos to promote equality in practice.
- Have a commitment to equality and a named member of staff responsible for equality.
- Handle questions about difference honestly, sensitively and openly.
- Recognise the need for training in equality whatever the demographic make up of your setting and its surrounding area.
- Have an equality action plan.
- Have a commitment to promoting good relations between different groups.
- Have a commitment to challenging and eradicating prejudice.
- Ensure that all adults are good role models for the children.
- Have wall displays that show people from diverse backgrounds doing everyday things.
- Check that your resources reflect diversity and do not promote negative stereotypes e.g. ensure dolls and puppets have accurate and realistic skin tones, facial features and hair textures.
- Ensure all practitioners have access to equalities training.
- Ensure all practitioners have an understanding of equality and diversity.
- Acknowledge or celebrate festivals to develop an awareness of similarities and differences between individuals.
- Invite visitors from all parts of the community into your setting.

2.2 Example of an Equality Action Plan

Equality Action Plan

Pre-school/Childminder/Out of School Club/Nursery/Setting

Name

Date

Action	How	By whom	Achieved by	Completed
Feedback to all staff from training	At next staff meeting feedback from the training course and the actions taken back to our setting			
As a staff team look at the IDP materials and discuss some of the scenarios	Choose a scenario and discuss in groups of 2 or 3 feedback of our comments to the whole staff team			
Review our equality of opportunity policy	Involve managers, staff, parents, committee etc.			

3. Practical information and ideas to support practitioners in early years and childcare settings

How do we welcome all families equally?

Things to consider:

- Is your environment welcoming?
- Do you record prejudice related incidents?
- Are all adults approachable?
- Do you ensure that children's names are spelt and pronounced correctly?
- Do you offer children a secure environment in which to explore their own culture and that of their peers?
- Do you know how to challenge prejudice?



The Learning Environment

Provide a language rich environment that reflects all languages (including sign language) used in the setting and which affirms the validity of languages other than English, even in groups where English is the only language spoken

Introduce different traditional foods at snack time and during cooking

Acknowledge or celebrate festivals from different faiths and cultures

Invite visitors from diverse parts of the community into your setting

Provide positive visual images of different people

Provide songs, rhymes and musical instruments from a wide range of cultures

Provide stories that reflect a variety of homes



It is helpful for practitioners to know:

- That children and young people often face stereotyping and prejudice for a wide variety of reasons.
- That children and young people need to have their cultures and customs valued and understand the importance of culture to children.
- How to introduce culture and customs to everyday learning.
- That parents and carers often don't want to highlight issues of discrimination.
- That children and young people often suffer issues of discrimination in Silence.
- That just because they don't hear/see prejudice incidents, does not mean that they are not happening.
- That parent on parent abuse and prejudice language is not acceptable.
- That new arrivals to the setting or this country often suffer from culture shock.
- That stereotyping on any grounds is not acceptable.
- That all cultures and customs need to be embraced.
- How children and young people experience the world differently depends on their background.
- About religion, belief and dress.
- That use of mother tongue is important (particularly in stressful situations).
- How to support the literacy and language needs of parents and carers.
- How to respect all families and the children of those families.
- How to support staff to build up a working knowledge of diverse communities.
- How to support the cultural needs of children, parents and carers.
- How to greet and communicate effectively with parents and carers.
- How to adapt provision to support difference and to meet diverse needs.

In order to value diversity practitioners should:

- Learn to understand what others actually believe and value, and let them express this in their own terms.
- Respect the convictions of others about food, dress and social etiquette and not behave in ways which cause needless offence.
- Recognise that all of us at times fall short of the ideals of our own traditions and never compare our own ideals with other people's practices.
- Work to prevent disagreement from leading to conflict.
- Ensure that other people's cultures, beliefs and practices are not misrepresented or disparaged.
- Correct misunderstanding or misrepresentations not only of our own culture but also of others whenever we come across them.
- Respect another person's expressed wish to be left alone.
- Avoid imposing ourselves and our views on individuals.
- Be sensitive and courteous.
- Avoid violent action or language, threats, manipulation, improper inducements, or the misuse of any kind of power.
- Respect the right of others to disagree with us.
- Be aware that racial, cultural and ethnic identity are often inter-related with religion and faith.
- Ask everyone how they would like to be addressed, how to pronounce their name and how to spell it.
- Become well informed – if you are not sure, ask (appropriate/relevant) questions and find out more information.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
- Recognise and guard against your own prejudices. Everyone has them!
- Don't assume that treating everyone in the same way is the same thing as treating everyone fairly.



3.1 Play resources

Resources cannot create a positive view of society by themselves it is the way that they are used and the way adults and children involve them in their play and activities that are the critical factors of change.

If a new black doll or a doll with a disability is left in the box and ignored, the children may receive subtle messages that the doll is not 'wanted'. Instead of the doll helping to create a positive view, these messages may reinforce negative messages about who is valued in society.

If dual language storybooks are the only multicultural resources in a monolingual setting and nothing active is done with them, they cannot help children understand the reality of our multicultural, multilingual society.

Ensure that the resources reflecting our intercultural society are used actively, in positive ways, and not just left lying around.

Talk about people from all diverse backgrounds who have contributed to the local and general culture, literature, sport, inventions and history in a way that young children can appreciate and understand.

Provide photographs of people from various parts of the world as well as in Britain depicting their lifestyles, houses, food, work, dress and leisure activities.

Books, pictures and language

Children need to be able to access a variety of books. Looking at books and illustrations, and being read to, all play an important part in children's language development. Books are also responsible for shaping children's understanding about different ethnic groups. Exposing children to a variety of literature can help them to understand the similarities and differences between different religions, cultures, languages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender and age. Books also allow issues to be raised and stereotypes to be challenged sensitively.

Children should be encouraged to speak in their home language to each other and during role-play. Dual language books and CDs, both commercial and those made by children and parents/carers should be freely available. Labels and multilingual posters are valuable, giving children and the community the message that the setting values diversity, (as long as they are not the only thing you do – this could then be considered as 'tokenism').

Persona Dolls

These are special dolls that do not live with the toys or dolls in the home corner. They represent particular 'people'. Persona dolls can be used to introduce children to differences that do not exist in the setting, to extend their awareness of diversity and to counter discrimination in society. They are particularly useful in developing children's concepts of understanding what is just and fair, and of learning to be critically aware of the world around them. Staff must be appropriately trained prior to the introduction of a persona doll.

Role Play

In order to promote inclusive values children need to be surrounded by the beauty from a variety of cultural contexts and everyday artefacts which encourage and promote cultural diversity and challenge stereotypes.

Suggested resources:

- Photograph albums showing families from diverse backgrounds. and posters that portray festivals and other cultural events.
- Kitchen utensils from a range of cultures.
- Dressing up clothes.
- Dolls that are authentic looking.
- Play food, either bought or made from play-dough/salt-dough.
- Travel brochures – the role play area could be set up as a travel agent, include a computer, telephone, pictures from different countries, note pads etc.

Snack times and cooking

Cooking and sharing food is a very enjoyable and social activity which allows for a great deal of practical work, and stimulates talk related to the senses of feeling, smelling, tasting and seeing food change during the cooking process. Children also have opportunities to learn about health, safety, hygiene, measuring, science, nutrition and to develop their vocabulary and language generally.

Music, rhymes and songs

Children love to participate in familiar songs and rhymes, especially action songs, which especially supports the inclusion of children with English as an additional language. Children should have opportunities to hear a range of music from around the world as well as see it being played. It is useful to have a range of musical instruments for the children to play with and for adults to use in playing rhythmic games.



3.2 Working with parents/carers

Strategies to help practitioners to work with parents/carers:

- Share your equalities policy with parents/carers when they come to look round or to register.
- Ensure all parents/carers feel that they and their children are wanted and that they have a positive role to play in the setting.
- Let parents know that they can always make their feelings, views and opinions known to the staff, and that these will be dealt with respectfully and taken seriously.
- Demonstrate that the parents' linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds are valued and seen as positive assets to the setting.
- Show that the early years or childcare setting is part of the community it serves and so understands the concerns, aspirations and difficulties the members of that community might face.
- Support parents for whom English is an additional language to access relevant information.
- Discuss suitable resources for your setting with parents/carers.
- Share information about early years and childcare provision with parents/carers, show them what happens in your setting, respect that their experiences may have been different in different countries.
- Invite family members of all ages into your setting to share their skills, knowledge and experiences.

