national
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2006-2010

diversity and equality guidelines
for childcare providers

Office of the Minister
for Children

Oifig an Aire do Leanaí

diversity and
equality guidelines
for childcare providers

December 2006

Contents

Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce the Diversity and Equality Guidelines which are an important addition to the work of the National Childcare Coordinating Committee (NCCC). As Minister for Children, I am very aware of the important work that is overseen by the Committee and the opportunity it provides for representatives of the early childhood care and education sector to come together in one forum. This provides a sectoral framework in which views and individual perspectives on key issues affecting early years care and education can be shared. In turn, this facilitates the formulation of objectives and a common stance on issues in this important area at the core of our future well-being as a society.

The NCCC and its members have been at the centre of Ireland's national childcare developments. To date, it has overseen the publication of a number of important reports which have examined the issues relating to early years childcare training and qualifications and the way in which school age childcare should be developed and delivered. In addition to the Guidelines published under this report, the NCCC has just published a set of National Guidelines for Childminders which I believe will be a source of excellent advice and support to this important sector through which early years care is delivered.

Equality and diversity are important issues to be addressed in every sector of our society. This is particularly the case at this point in time in Ireland as we experience inward migration from across the world and, for the first time, are faced with significant levels of identifiable cultural and ethnic diversity. However, these guidelines seek to raise awareness of all diversity experienced in every part of Irish society. It is important that we adapt to these changes with the assistance of clear guidance and advice so that, in positively responding to difference, we have a better understanding of the steps we should take and the practices where change may be needed.

There is no more appropriate place to do this or to start the process than in an environment which cares for young children and which has day to day contact with their parents. The Guidelines which are set out in this report provide an excellent basis to inform all of us who have an interest or work directly in the childcare sector. They provide relevant and practical information on the steps which can be taken to support equal and inclusive treatment.

As Minister for Children, I believe respecting equality and diversity is fundamental to the well-being of children, their families and the wider society. I would like to thank the members of the NCCC Working Group and the staff of the Childcare Directorate of the OMC for the work they have done to prepare this comprehensive, clear and insightful set of Guidelines. I would also like to thank the members of the NCCC for their continued interest in and dedication to the important area of early years care and education.

Brian Lenihan, T.D.
Minister for Children

Acknowledgements

These Guidelines were prepared by Colette Murray, Miranda Crooke and Annie O'Doherty, with assistance from Marian Hanrahan, on behalf of an Advisory Subgroup for children with special requirements, minority ethnic children and Traveller children. This subgroup was established under the auspices of the National Childcare Coordinating Committee, which is chaired by the Office of the Minister for Children.

Membership of the Subgroup included representatives from:

Children's Rights Alliance

Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta

Forum for People with Disabilities

IPPA, on behalf of the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations

Irish Refugee Council

Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Jack & Jill Foundation

National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism

OPEN - One Parent Exchange & Network

Pavee Point

Pobal (formerly ADM Ltd)

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Definitions

In the guidelines

'Diversity' refers to:

- The diverse nature of Irish society for example in terms of social class, gender, returned Irish emigrants, family status, minority groups and the majority group.

'Equality' refers to:

- The importance of recognising different individual needs and of ensuring equity in terms of access, participation and benefits for all children and their families. It is therefore not about treating people the 'same'.

What do we mean by '**Childcare**', '**Childcare Setting**'?

- The term '**childcare**', as one word, now generally refers to a variety of services providing non-parental care and education for children 0-14 years of age.

- The term '**childcare setting**' refers to all the places where children are cared for and educated including the home, crèches, naíonraí, pre-schools, after-school programmes and primary schools.

In the guidelines the term 'minority group' includes but is not limited to:
- People with a disability

- The Traveller community

- Economic migrants

- Black Irish

- Irish language speakers

- Refugees

- Asylum seekers

- Children with gay or lesbian parents

- Families of minority religious faith

The Majority of the Gaeltacht population are bilingual. While the Irish language may be the dominant language used by the majority within the Gaeltacht area, Irish language speakers in general may be considered a minority grouping within the national context.

The guidelines are for childcare and early childhood:

- Practitioners

- Managers

- Teachers

- Development workers

- Tutors

- Course developers

- Policy makers

These guidelines complement the work of Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (CECDE 2006) and will support the forthcoming Early Childhood Curriculum Framework being prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Disability Terminology

Within the disability sector some prefer to use the phrase *'people with disabilities'* and some prefer the phrase *'disabled people'*. This is an individual preference: some are comfortable to use either interchangeably, while others strongly prefer one over the other.

In this manual we use both, referring to *'disabled children'* and *'a child with a disability'*.

Under the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004, discrimination in the supply of goods and provision of services is prohibited on nine grounds:

- Gender

- Marital status

- Family status

- Sexual orientation

- Religious belief

- Age

- Disability

- 'Race'

- Membership of the Traveller Community

Introduction

"Inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights. Within the field of education this is reflected in the development of strategies that seek to bring about a genuine equalisation of opportunity."
The Salamanca World Statement (UNESCO 1994:11) – signed by 92 governments (see p. 64 of Special Ed. Needs, Inclusion and Diversity by Frederickson, N & Cline, Tony (2002)

In this document we wish to explore why we should and how we can acknowledge, celebrate and benefit from our differences. Its aim is to support and equip childcare managers and practitioners with the insights and skills to recognise and work with diversity and equality issues within their settings.

Historically in Ireland the richness of diversity among the population has not always been valued, nor have differences been equally cherished. As a result Ireland has not always shown due regard for the diverse needs of all people with equal concern.

Those dedicated to serving children and families effectively are confronted with an increasingly multi-faceted population in Ireland embracing: social class, gender, returned Irish, family status, people with disabilities, gay and lesbian people in families, ethnic minorities, the Traveller community, economic migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, Irish language speakers, religious minorities, Black Irish, the majority population and many others.

But it is not the differences that cause problems, rather, how people react. Which is where these guidelines come in - specifically developed to help people in their response to diversity. Issues surrounding diversity and equality go hand in hand with discrimination in all its forms. Everyone is affected, but for those of us who are practitioners in childcare, it is especially vital to have an understanding of its impact on the lives of many parents and their children.

Very young children are influenced by societal attitudes and behaviours. Indeed research reveals that children as young as 3 years display signs of prejudice and negative attitudes towards difference. From the earliest years of their interaction with the wider world, children will need to develop the understanding, skills and outlook necessary to ensure that Irish society becomes truly inclusive. A place where difference is valued, where diverse groups interact and where this interaction is underpinned by equality, human rights, mutual respect and understanding.

To learn how to embrace diversity effectively, we must look at the ways we view difference in our own thinking and how this influences our childcare practice. Diversity holds the potential to be a rich source of vital learning for our children. But before we can achieve this aim, practitioners and managers will need to explore their own attitudes and practices, to ensure that each child will have an inclusive and equitable experience.

With the support and guidance of this manual, childcare practitioners can increase their knowledge, learn to critically reflect on how attitudes develop and are manifested at personal and societal levels, and finally, acquire new skills for putting respect for diversity into practice.

The journey is not easy, but one that is essential to make if we are to build a childcare system and a society that truly nurtures all of its children. It is a journey that requires practitioners to critically reflect on and review practice regularly and to recognise that, first and foremost, the task is to nurture and cherish all children. To do this effectively and meaningfully it is important to understand that it is the children themselves that must be valued and respected. To be authentic in this work, practitioners must be well informed about each individual child, about

their capabilities, their interests, their culture and their background. Informed by this knowledge practitioners can respond respectfully in their practice to the rich diversity around them. Diversity and equality in childcare is about validating and cherishing all children. This is just as important for children from the majority culture as it is for those from minority groups.

Without doubt, diversity is a wonderful thing, enriching Irish society and culture. The greater our understanding and appreciation of difference, the more we will all benefit and grow.

Policy Context

These guidelines are informed by international agreements and Irish legislation and policy, these include:

- The Irish Constitution (1937) (Bunreacht na h'Eireann)
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1963)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)
- Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004
- Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004
- Disability Act 2005
- National Children's Strategy 2000 -2010
- Children First Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of children (1999)
- Child Care Act 1991
- Children Act 2001
- The Official Languages Act 2003

By ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Ireland committed to:

"respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status." Article 2

Ireland also committed to:

"take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinion, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members." Article 2

Aim and objectives of the guidelines

These guidelines aim to support childcare practitioners, early childhood teachers, managers and policy makers in their exploration, understanding and development of diversity and equality practice.

Objectives

- Foster awareness about diversity and equality issues.
- Stimulate discussion about bias and discrimination.
- Encourage the development of services that are inclusive of all children and their families.

The guidelines are prepared on behalf of the National Childcare Coordinating Committee and are informed by a range of current diversity, equality and anti-discriminatory educational approaches. They draw heavily on the Anti-bias Approach developed by Louise Derman-Sparks in the USA, now widely adapted and used in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA.

How to Use the Guidelines

The guidelines are in six sections, with each sub-divided for ease of access. Managers, practitioners or project workers can choose appropriate parts of the guidelines to begin their exploration. It will be important to assess which areas your staff feels comfortable dealing with initially. Each section and sub-section can be read as a stand-alone guide; key points are reiterated throughout the document to facilitate this. However we recommend you read *Section One: Attitudes and Values* before embarking on working with a more practical section such as *Access to the Service*.
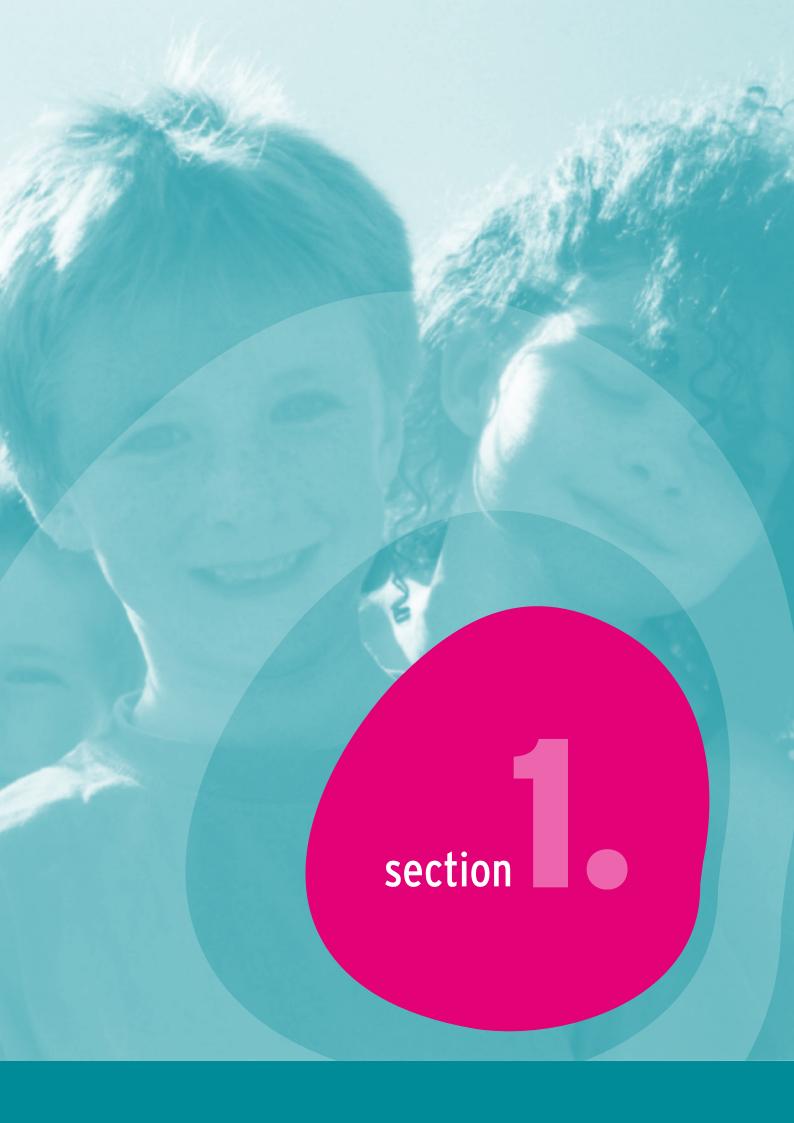
These guidelines can help to:

- Improve knowledge and understanding of diversity, equality and discrimination issues.

- Challenge one's own thinking, assisting critical reflection and the development of new thinking.

- Further understanding as to why diversity and equality policies and practice are important and relevant to childcare services.

- Generate ideas for discussion at team and network meetings.

- Develop ideas to tackle discriminatory or difficult issues that arise in practice.

- Discover ways to assess and critically reflect on the childcare environment and daily practice.

- Learn how to access information on racism, equality, diversity approaches in childcare.

- Find out how to source and/or develop resources and activities.

- Gain new skills to support all levels of work on diversity and equality issues.

- Create policies and procedures on equality and diversity.

Working with diversity, equality and anti-discrimination issues is a continuing challenge and these guidelines should not be seen a recipe book. Rather, they offer an opportunity to explore one's own attitudes to diversity, give practical ideas to make initial changes in the setting, and suggestions to develop equality and diversity practices to benefit the children. Equally crucial; they provide a platform for crucially reflecting on and rethinking attitudes to diversity and equality. Teaming with others interested in furthering this work will enhance the process, as diversity and equality issues can raise surprisingly difficult questions.

Regard these guidelines as a starting point, designed to provoke questions, challenge thinking and offer advice and support for change. In doing so, you will be helping to work towards a more inclusive society for all citizens, beginning with our youngest:

"Be aware of the present you are constructing; it should be the future you want."
Alice Walker, African American Writer

section **1.**

Values and Attitudes

"To be able to develop understanding of others you have to know who you are, overcome biases you have learned about other groups and have a highly developed sense of empathy and justice." Louise Derman-Sparks (2001)

Why Do We Need to Explore Values and Attitudes?

Children are growing up in a diverse society. Research reveals they are aware, at three and four years and sometimes earlier, of ethnic, 'racial', gender, language and physical differences. They notice differences and similarities as part of their natural developmental process and assimilate positive and negative, spoken and unspoken messages about difference. These influences are part of the child's development of self-identity and self-esteem. Children learn and have their views reinforced by attitudes they experience primarily through relationships with adults and the broader community.

Young children enter the childcare environment not as blank slates but with a general awareness of difference. Adults need to acknowledge this awareness and the reality that diversity, equality and anti-discriminatory issues are part of everyday life in the childcare setting. Embracing and working with a diversity and equality approach is integral to the provision of high quality childcare practice.

The Role of the Adult

Adults play a vital part in supporting children in their day-to-day lives and in helping children become active citizens. Adults should explore their own attitudes in relation to diversity and equality; recognising that they impart attitudinal information to children and understanding the ways this can happen. Only then can they develop the awareness, insights and skills to implement an inclusive diversity and equality programme with the objective of ensuring *all* children and their families are protected from discrimination and encouraged to express their diversity.

To actively encourage and support young children in embracing both diversity and equality, it is essential to constructively challenge all incidents of bias, prejudice, discrimination, racism and sexism and other 'isms' as they occur. In Ireland incidents are most likely to involve religion, social class, family structures, sexual orientation, disability, gender, Travellers and, increasingly, attitudes towards other ethnic groups.

Adults are not immune to negative thoughts about diversity issues, therefore their attitudes and ideas towards difference need to be explored, acknowledged and worked on. Practitioners are then in a position to recognise and help young victims of discrimination and also help children to unlearn negative feeling towards difference.

Following an exploration of personal and community attitudes it becomes easier to review and revise practice in the childcare setting and the interaction between childcare practitioners and children. Changing childcare practice in relation to equality and diversity involves:

- critically reflecting on your own attitudes and values and how they influence children

- trying out new policies; actions and practices

- learning from mistakes

- ongoing reflection on one's own and others' difficulties

- imaginatively thinking of new ways to work including exercises and activities

- continually questioning and reviewing the process

In this way, practitioners help each child towards achieving his/her full potential.

To have a diversity and equality focus in childcare work, practitioners require knowledge and skills, but firstly and most importantly they must embark on a progressive journey of becoming self-aware. It is essential to take time to reflect on attitudes and values individually and within a team or network setting. Thinking about and discussing these issues, using the suggestions outlined below, is helpful in understanding their influence on work practices and for generating ideas and actions for change.

Becoming the **Critically** Reflective Practitioner

Points to Keep in Mind When Critically Reflecting on Values and Attitudes

General Awareness

- Diversity is a majority issue with relevance for all adults and children. Everyone can learn to be comfortable with difference.

- All adults and children are influenced by the prejudicial views which exist in society, therefore children as young as 3 can display negative comments and ideas about difference.

- The institutions in our society (e.g. the education system, religion and the media) have a strong influence on how our attitudes and values are formed.

- Everyone has a culture. Culture is learned.

- Values differ across cultures, social classes, families and communities.

- Discrimination hurts and influences how children and adults relate in the world.

- Children pick up messages from adult behaviour: from the things that are said and not said, what is valued or not valued in terms of differences. Children hear how adults talk to and about others.

- Childcare training courses generally assume a universal understanding of child development, often overlooking cultural and class variations in attitudes to child development or different parenting traditions.

Personal Awareness as Practitioners

- Personal attitudes and values affect all aspects of service delivery, including policy and programme development and work with families.

- Expectations about the way children learn or behave, or how successful they are likely to become, and views about how families live their lives, are all influenced by attitudes and values.

Awareness for Work with Families from Minority Groups

- Families may have a valid fear that they and their children will be treated differently when using a service.

- Families may have concerns that their child's home culture or language may become 'lost' or 'compromised' if not supported in the service. This does not mean teaching culture, but showing the culture is valued.

- Families may have different traditions and approaches to child rearing from that of the majority group in society. From the perspective of the majority culture, our own values and traditional approach often appear 'correct' or 'best', while unfamiliar ways may seem 'strange' or 'wrong' to practitioners.

The **Critical** Reflection Process

"A willingness to take risks, to be self-introspective, and learn from mistakes."
Louise Derman Sparks & Carol Brunson Phillips. (1997)

These key questions will help you undertake an in-depth exploration of your own values and attitudes, both individually and within team or network discussions. To gain awareness, ask yourself:

Can I?

- Be comfortable sharing feelings and experiences about bias or discrimination?

- Stand back, examine and discuss objectively my own ethnicity and culture?

- Stand up for myself if a target of discrimination?

- Identify unfair and untrue images, comments and behaviours made about people from minority backgrounds?

- Identify and empathise with adults and children affected by discrimination and racism?

- Recognise, acknowledge and understand influences on children's attitudes and values from home, the childcare setting, community, media and the wider world?

- Identify and discuss what are acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours in the professional context, e.g. discussion in relation to a child or family or amongst clients using the service?

- Recognise there are unequal power relations within society?

- Explain what prejudice, discrimination and racism mean?

- Understand the impact of prejudice, discrimination and racism on families and children?

- Recognise and explore any misinformation, stereotypes, prejudices I have learned?

- Recognise excuses or objections to avoid doing this work within myself and from others around me?
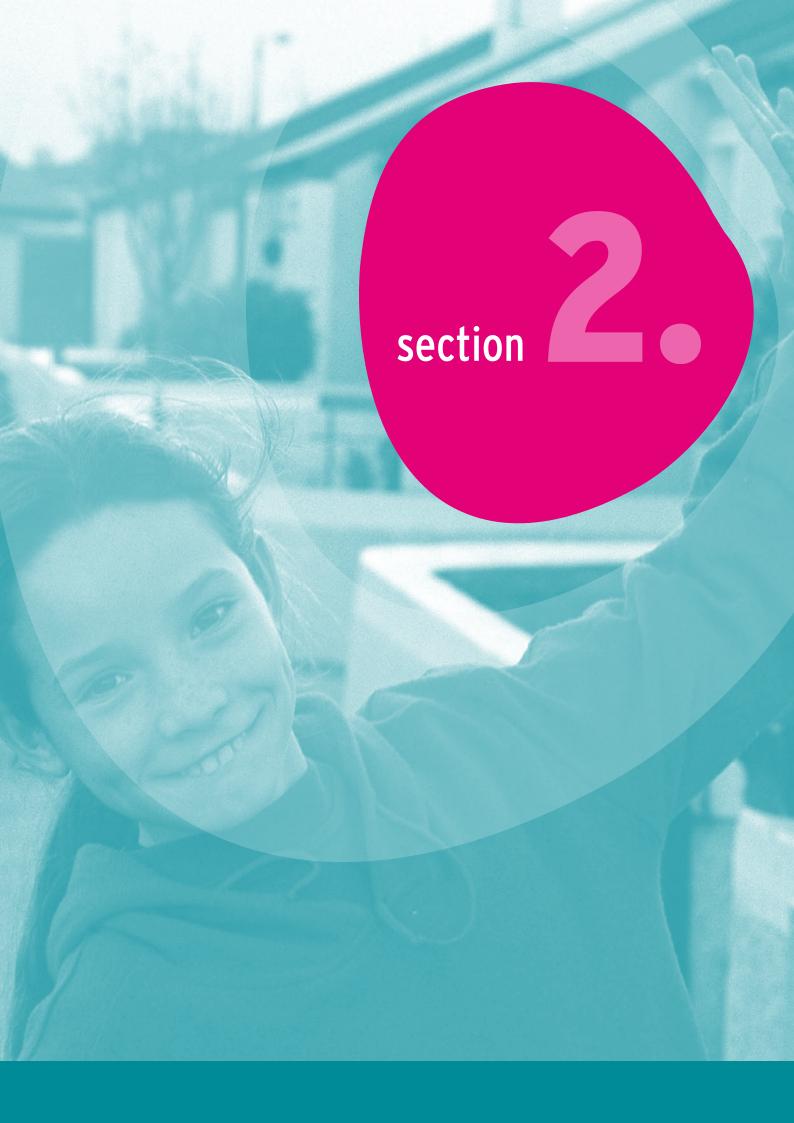
Do I have the skills to:

- Empower children and others to stand up to discrimination?

- Create a setting which reflects and includes all children in the setting?

- Support the home culture of the child?

- Use non-verbal forms of communication, along with verbal?

- Recognise negative attitudes when they arise and develop ways to change them?

- Reflect on everything the children experience in the service to identify any bias?

- Ensure that routine activities offer opportunities to reflect diversity of background, religion, skin colour, family structures, language, culture or disability in a positive way that will help all become aware of and respectful of differences?

How to Get Support

- Seek out diversity education training to eliminate bias, which includes looking at personal attitudes in a non-threatening context, enhance understanding of diversity and enable the development of self-knowledge and skills. (For more information see Appendices)

- Networking. Learning together is the best method of developing awareness and knowledge on diversity and anti-discriminatory practice. Link with the local County Childcare Committee (see also organisations listed in Appendices) and/or set up your own discussion group with other practitioners in your area.

"Changing attitudes and beliefs takes time. Remember that each individual needs...to change at their own pace...The overall message is one of valuing each individual for the skills and background they have. This includes their family background, race, beliefs, language and so on. Each individual sees the world though their own perspectives and with assistance through the perspectives of others." Arthur, L. (1993)

section **2.**

1. Working with Children

"Early childhood education holds tremendous promise for raising a new generation, with each child not only proud of their own heritage and identity, but committed to standing up against bias in all its many forms." Margie Carter and Deb Curtis (1994)

Why Do We Need to Consider Diversity and Equality Issues in Our Work with Children?

Diversity and equality issues affect everyone, so we must support all children in their development as active citizens. Practitioners need the empathy, understanding and skills to help children achieve a positive sense of themselves and of others. Our role: to protect and value all children in the setting, foster empathy and provide accurate information about difference to enable children to think critically about and challenge bias.

How Can We As Practitioners Address Diversity and Equality?

A diversity and equality approach involves creating a childcare setting where each child feels a sense of belonging. Practitioners should observe and listen to children's play and adult interaction to identify any bias or discrimination, then develop methods to deal with issues that arise. Every aspect of the setting comes into play: how children relate to each other, how staff relate to minority and majority children, how language is used, how and what discussions take place, and what activities are undertaken.

The insights within this section are inspired by the anti-bias approach developed by *Louise Derman-Sparks and the Anti-Bias Task Force (USA) and further developed by the DECET European Network[1] and Glenda Mac Naughton (Melbourne University Australia).* It helps adults working with young children to critically reflect on and change where necessary their attitudes to difference. Derman-Sparks sets out initial steps for understanding the daily lives of all children in the setting, followed by ideas for changing programme activities. The approach, which complements existing programmes, was developed to help people appreciate diversity and view its challenges in a positive light.

The approach establishes four goals for adults and children. These are briefly outlined below, together with guidelines towards achieving the goals. Each goal addresses a particular area of growth and builds upon and interacts with the others.

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[1] Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training (DECET) European Network

Children	Adults
1. To support children's identity and sense of belonging.	1. To be conscious of one's own culture, attitudes and values and how they influence practice.
2. To support children to become comfortable with difference.	2. To be comfortable with difference, engage effectively with families
3. To foster each child's critical thinking about bias.	3. To critically think about bias and discrimination
4. To empower children to stand up for themselves and others in the face of bias.	4. To confidently engage in dialogue around issues of bias and discrimination

Goal 1:
Supporting Children's Identity and Sense of Belonging

"I want ye all to know I'm a Traveller because it's important to me that everyone is clear about my identity." Chrissie O'Sullivan (2001)

This first goal helps children develop a strong sense of who they are at individual and group identity levels. Along with personal awareness, children can build a comfortable and confident identity based on the multiple groups to which they belong (ethnic, gender, nationality etc), without feeling superior or inferior to anybody else or any other group.

When beginning this work it is important to identify the backgrounds of all children in the setting; whether largely majority culture or a mix of majority and minority groups. Discuss in the team if all cultures are realistically reflected in the environment and if imagery and materials require changes.

Children who feel valued and supported are more likely to be optimistic and learn well. It is important to recognise that family, home, culture, gender, language, ethnicity and ability are important to every child's developing sense of self (see Section 5). Practitioners must also be conscious of multiple identities, for example, a child of mixed cultural heritage, a disabled Traveller or a Black child from a new immigrant community and single parent home.

Ideas for Supporting Children's Identity and Sense of Belonging

- Ensure you have explored your own feelings about diversity and have reflected on your own cultural context.

- Respect names, how they are pronounced and spelt.

- Ensure the environment depicts all children and backgrounds in the setting. Reflect the everyday reality of the child's life (not out of context images) to support and validate his/her daily experiences.

- Include or refer to aspects of all the children's identities in activities: casual conversations, stories told and read, food, art, music and dramatic play props and themes. For example, facilitate children by giving opportunities to talk about different kinds of families and family structures. Some children may live with one parent, in both parents' homes, with gay or lesbian parents, with a foster family, a stepparent, or with an extended family.

- Talk with children and devise activities around the ways in which people are the same as well as different. Children will feel more comfortable talking about matters like disability, skin colour, living in a trailer etc.

- Look for opportunities to recognise a child's individual skills, talents and abilities to encourage pride in his or her personal and cultural identity. Find opportunities to tune into individual interests and strengths; caring for animals, speaking cant, knowledge of cars (e.g. a child with a disability, from a disadvantaged background, Traveller child).

- Discourage any sense of superiority whereby a child may express that their way of life is 'correct' or preferred.

- Provide a wide range of positive role models in a variety of positions. This helps build confidence and a sense of possibilities for the future. Seeing negative images or no images of people sharing your background or ability can send negative messages and a child may reject his/her identity.

- Be aware of the cultural and educational significance of the child's first language. For example, while assisting the children in acquiring English/Irish as a second language, encourage parents to use their family language with children. Also encourage parents to support the child in the learning of the second language.

Goal 2:
Supporting Children to Become Comfortable with Difference

"The way that you behave will have an impact on the children and your outlook and attitudes will become visible to them through your words and actions." Jenny Lindon (1999)

This goal aims to foster empathy and comfort with difference among all children. Practitioners can guide young children to learn respectfully about differences; understanding and adapting while accepting the common humanity shared by all. Even the very young can discover that others may have the same feelings as they do, despite having a different lifestyle, language, religion, social class, family

set-up or physical appearance/abilities. We can support children's emotional development, appreciating that diversity makes life richer, and we can enhance their ability to communicate, cooperate and collaborate across difference.

Ideas to Help Children Gain Respect for Difference

- Practitioners need to be aware of their own feelings and opinions regarding differences.

- Observe children's peer group interaction to see how well children are accepted as playmates. For instance, watch for incidents where children are included or excluded and reflect on the reason. Record such incidents and develop activities that deal with issues that arise in a sensitive way, to break down barriers and eliminate fear of difference.

- Intervene to eliminate any notions of superiority or inferiority. At the same time promote each child's status within the group in a sensitive way.

- Explore feelings with all the children and help them understand that words can hurt. It is vital to deal with incidents when they happen and if appropriate, follow up through a later activity to reinforce the message. However, there may be times when issues cannot be dealt with immediately. Develop ways to explore these issues later. For example, a storybook can be a useful tool for dealing with fear or exclusion, to avoid highlighting these issues with reference to a particular child.

- Where one child says or does something hurtful to another they may perceive as different, you need to challenge the child about what was said, giving accurate information and ensuring that the child understands the hurt caused. The child who was hurt must also be supported. This interaction should be sensitive to the feelings of both children. Telling a child it is not nice to say a particular thing without explanation, will not change the child's attitude and could reinforce the notion that there is something wrong with difference.

- Inform yourself of the effects of sustained teasing and bullying. (See Appendices).

Goal 3:
Fostering Each Child's Critical Thinking About Bias

"One of the most powerful lessons that I have learned is that even young children are able to reflect on issues that impact on their identity and their lives. The world of children is governed by the same values and beliefs that govern the world of adults" Segura-Mora 2002

This goal aims to help adults and children become critical thinkers about bias, giving them the skills to identify what images and behaviours are fair and unfair. Children and adults need to understand why names, images, certain phrases and behaviours are unkind, untrue and unfair. They also should begin to learn skills to resist biases and stereotypes that can influence them.

Ideas to Support the Development of Critical Thinking

- Expand your knowledge on diversity issues to communicate accurate information and provide new learning opportunities for the children.

- Stereotypical ideas should be challenged on the spot. To do so, practitioners must be comfortable with difference and in dealing with challenge. Discussing difficult situations at team meetings helps develop the necessary skills and confidence.

- Use books and display photographs that challenge stereotypes, e.g. a female carpenter. Invite guests to speak to the children about their occupations, e.g. a male nurse.

- Use clear explanations and language when discussing discrimination or racism with adults and children.

- Evaluate at team meetings and with the children, images in books, toys, television and videos to see if they are fair or unfair. Discuss what is missing as well as what is present. Provide accurate images for comparison (see section 5 on assessing the physical environment)

- Help children to express why an image is unfair and to understand how stereotyping can hurt people.

Goal 4:
Empowering Children to Stand Up for Themselves and Others in the Face of Bias

"I remember when we were at school: we were powerless, subjected to subtle stereotypes and prejudices from teachers and peers." Doreen Reynolds (2001)

If children are beginning to understand fairness and unfairness, they will need the tools to stand up against injustice. Discrimination is a reality and children benefit from growing up prepared to deal with it. By learning to express their feelings to other children when they or someone else has been hurt, children gain the skills to support others. Practitioners also require this ability as they play a vital role in enabling children to protect themselves.

Ideas to Support Children to Stand Up for Themselves and Others.

- Adults need to develop the skill and be visibly active against negativity in relation to difference leading by example.

- Children need to know how to say, 'That's not fair', or 'I don't like what you are doing/saying' when they are the target of prejudice or discrimination or when another child is being targeted.

- Children can actively learn the skills for standing up against bias if practitioners model appropriate responses and provide opportunities for children to build on their experiences.

- See Table: Supporting Children Becoming Comfortable with Difference.

2. Responding to Discriminatory Incidents

"Time after time, children's honest questions and comments about people are met with responses meant to silence them: 'Shhh', 'Don't say that', 'It's not nice to stare', 'Don't be rude'." Stacy York (1998)

Practitioners should recognise bias or discrimination as it is happening, and know how to respond sensitively and appropriately, e.g. when a child makes a statement or asks a question that reveals bias or when a child teases or excludes another child. Practitioners also need to be able to work with and challenge discriminatory issues with adults.

Ideas for Dealing with Discriminatory Incidents

- Make it a rule that exclusion or name-calling is not acceptable and discuss this with the children in a sensitive and unauthoritative manner.

- When a child says something hurtful to another child that refers to difference, intervene immediately and remind her or him of the rule. Do not ignore.

- Determine the real reasons for the conflict or exclusion.

- Children may call other children names that have racist connotations without fully understanding what they say. They still need to understand that hurt was caused. On the other hand, research shows that children can know exactly when to use a derogatory term to hurt another child (see, Connolly (2005), van Ausdale & Feagin (2001)

- Comfort the child who was a target of discrimination and help him/her verbalise their feelings. Equally support the child who caused the hurt. Children need to be helped to recognise what is happening and learn that it is equally unacceptable for them to be a target or to target others.

- If fear or prejudice is the underlying reason, try to learn more about the child's bias and make a long term plan to address the issue. This will involve discussion with the families and other staff.

- Intervention should be immediate and will need to be followed up with both children.

- Use puppets or dolls to demonstrate a situation of name-calling or exclusion, and ask the children about the feelings involved.

3. Pointers when Developing a Diversity and Equality Approach

Children

- All activities or opportunities provided need to be appropriate to the age and level of understanding among the children in your group.

- It is important that children from minority groups are supported and not singled out in discussions about diversity and equality issues.

- Providing accurate information will help children work through issues that may arise. If you do not have all the facts, tell the children and discuss with them how to find out what you need to know.

- Explore what children think about different groups in Irish society. Opportunities can then be created which may challenge their thinking.

- A child who finds that the way things are done at home is never mentioned, or becomes aware that it is considered strange, may reject that which was taught at home and start to express concerns about being different.

- Positively encourage play in areas that children might not usually be engaged.

- Learn about children's understanding of issues or their attitudes to individuals or groups, by talking with them in a direct way or by observing incidents that may arise during play. Document these issues and follow up with developed activities to build understanding. When developing activities think in advance about possible reactions and how you might respond.

Adults

- Adults need to be challenged if using stereotypical expressions relating to the appearance or behaviour of children and parents.

- Adults should refuse to tolerate negative expressions which insult a child's or adult's background or culture.

- Ensure all adults working in and using the service understand the policy on diversity and equality.

- Use parent meetings to explore issues of prejudice.

In carrying out programme activities that focus on festivals and special days practitioners need to ask:

- Is the activity relevant for children in the group?

- Why am I doing this activity and who will it benefit?

- Is the activity authentic and respectful?

- How does the activity benefit the children?

- Will some children feel excluded (e.g. when Christmas, Mother's or Father's Day are celebrated)?

- What alternatives can be offered for these children?

- How do families feel about the activity? (See section 6 on Religion and Festivals.)

Ensuring the Participation of All Children

"A major challenge for caregivers and teachers of diverse groups of children (culture, race and social class) is to find ways of validating the skills that children bring to the setting." Kenise Murphy Kilbride (1997)

Practitioners play a crucial role in sparking children's natural curiosity about differences and similarities in family and community life.

Ideas to Support Children's Participation

- Use visual and other non-verbal methods to facilitate meaningful participation of children learning English or Irish as an additional language, such as pictures and gestures. A child who is learning English as a second or additional language has the same intellectual, social, emotional and physical needs as any other child.

- Ensure that children with a hearing or visual impairment can join in all activities such as storytelling and singing, art, music and movement.

- Children who are wheelchair users do not have to remain in the wheelchair at all times. Make some learning activities available at ground level. Do not expect the disabled child to adapt to a game. Develop ways to ensure that all children can take part in movement activities, including those with motor disabilities or poor muscle tone who may be able to exercise the parts of the body not affected by the particular condition.

- Be aware that finger rhymes can be confusing for children using sign language.

- Include activities in which speech is not required for full participation, such as art, drama, music and movement.

- Predictable routines are needed for children with autistic spectrum disorders.

- Ensure that all children, including those with special educational needs, are given tasks with responsibility and that all achievements are celebrated.

- Find and use local opportunities to acquaint children with diversity, such as a trip to the art gallery, cultural heritage centers, specialised food shops, museums.

section **3.**

1. Diversity and Equality Policy

"An inclusive approach to education is not just a matter of making minor (or major) adjustments; inclusion is a process, which has to run through the whole curriculum, if it is to be genuine." Preschool Learning Alliance (No Date)

Why Do We Need a Policy on Diversity and Equality?

Having a written policy on diversity and equality sets the context for the implementation of procedures and for high quality practice. It gives clarity and support to managers, staff, children and their families and is essential to ensuring that your practice is inclusive and fair and that discriminatory incidents will be appropriately addressed. Practitioners have a duty not to discriminate on the grounds of disability, marital status, race, family status, membership of the Travelling community, sexual orientation, religious belief, age and gender. **Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004.**

Points to Consider When Developing Your Policy

• The process of developing a policy on diversity and equality will help staff to recognise, appreciate and understand diversity and equality issues and how discrimination can occur in childcare settings.

• Having a written policy, which is implemented, will help to regulate how discriminatory situations are dealt with and help avoid misunderstandings.

• Diversity and equality issues must be addressed at all levels of service provision.

• A diversity and equality policy is evidence of the commitment to comply with the *Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004 and the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004.*

However, a well-intentioned policy document is not enough when dealing with discrimination. Action must be taken.

Steps to Follow in Developing and Monitoring your Policy

Step One

- Discuss and outline your policy needs.

- Seek specialist advice and training if necessary about diversity and equality including racism and discrimination issues (see Appendices).

- Seek examples of diversity and equality policies from childcare literature or other sources; however, use only to guide policy development.

- Seek support from other childcare practitioners, organisations or County Childcare Committees that carried out this process. Don't look for a standard formula – there is none.

- Allocate special responsibility to one senior individual to oversee the process.

- Develop an action and implementation plan with a timescale showing how long it will take to develop and implement.

Step Two

- Ensure all those who use or work in the service are involved (include families, children, management, all staff and groups in the local community). The policy needs to be understood and owned by all those who will use it.

- Ensure that all children's views are heard and considered through a consultative and participative process. For children to contribute, this process must be carried out in a meaningful and age appropriate manner.

- Ensure information is available to all participants and the relevance of legislation is understood, e.g. definitions of terms and anti-discrimination legislation (Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004 and Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004).

- Refer parents to the parental guidelines on diversity and equality issues.

- Allow plenty of time for discussion and clarification for all parties.

Step Three

- Ensure everyone working in the setting is committed to the implementation of the policy on diversity and equality.

- Use staff meetings to review implementation of the action plan and the effectiveness of the evolving policy.

- Use and document these discussions - this will be a useful record charting the workability of the policy.

- The first time the setting develops the policy there should be broad consultation. Review the policy via an annual meeting to discuss what can be improved. Circulate the document to all parties involved for consideration (translated, where possible, into home languages and with literacy support for families who need it).

What Should a Policy Document Include?

An Equality and Non-Discrimination Policy Should State a Commitment to:

- Access to the service.

- Analyse practice and procedures in the setting and remove or rectify anything that is identified as being discriminatory towards any group or individual.

- An equal opportunities recruitment policy and procedure and recognition of the benefits of having diversity in the team.

- A stated policy and procedure for dealing with discriminatory incidents or harassment involving adults or between children.

- Providing equipment, materials and programme activities free of any bias that challenge stereotypes together with a commitment to challenge bias and discrimination within activities or interaction where it occurs.

- The involvement of families, inviting and encouraging support and contributions from families relating to disability, language, heritage or cultural traditions, including the Irish language and culture.

- Promotion of awareness of cultures and languages indigenous to Ireland as part of Irish cultural identity.

- An outline and introduction to the equality legislation currently in place.

- Procedures and guidelines for resolving disagreements, conflicts or complaints by families who disagree with the practice of the diversity and equality approach.

- Naming of the areas of diversity so that groups are made visible in the policy (in terms of religion, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, 'race', language, gender, disability, family status, membership of the Traveller community).

- Reviewing policies with new parents and staff.

Policies are Unique

No two settings are identical. Adopting a ready-made policy may seem to save time and effort, but it will not address your specific needs and your team will miss out on the benefits of discussing important issues. Developing your own equality policy ensures everyone involved will understand and own it. When people are involved in its development, a policy is more likely it is to be practiced, useful and valued.

2. Management and Teamwork

"It is not possible to change your practice just by yourself because we all operate out of our own cultural perspective...We have to learn how to talk together, to work together, and to become collaborative and that's not always easy for adults!" Louise Derman-Sparks (2001)

Why Do We Need to Consider Management and Teamwork?

Management must provide leadership to ensure shared commitment from the childcare team towards achieving equality and anti-discrimination practice in all aspects of the service. Their role will include making sure policies and procedures are implemented and providing the necessary support to create the conditions needed to address diversity and equality issues effectively.

The Management Role

Ensuring diversity and equality issues are addressed throughout the entire service will require:

- Leadership and commitment at senior level to the development and implementation of policies for change.

- Management knowledge of diversity, equality and anti-discrimination issues.

- Agreement and commitment from all staff to address these issues throughout daily activities.

- Specialist training (if necessary) so that management and practitioners adopt a shared understanding and approach for the organisation and its services.

- Willing and open communication throughout the team and management on these issues.

- Allocation of responsibility to a senior staff member to oversee the implementation of the policy on diversity and equality. Progress towards targets should be regularly reviewed.

- Links with the designated diversity representative on the County Childcare Committee or other organisations for advice and support.

Teamwork

Staff meetings can be used to discuss diversity and equality issues and for making long term plans. The agreed diversity and equality policy should be used as a reference. Issues that arise can then, if necessary, be followed up in individual support and supervision sessions. So all staff feel comfortable, ground rules should be established. With these conditions in place, team meetings can be a safe forum to explore and develop:

Attitudes and Values

- Staff members need to reflect on and examine their personal attitudes and values. Identify how they have been influenced by society and how their attitudes influence their work: e.g. school, religion, family and the media.

- Aim for consensus among staff members.

- Foster a safe environment for staff to discuss difficult issues which may arise with adults or children in the setting.

Improve Knowledge

- Assess and raise the level of awareness amongst the team about diversity and equality issues and practice.

- Develop and review the written policy on diversity and equality.

- Discuss terminology and definitions.

- Discuss educational approaches and achieve a shared understanding.

- Assess, monitor and document practice on a regular basis in conjunction with the policy and code of practice.

- Identify and support any relevant training gaps within the team.

Develop Skills

- Evaluate the environment and current practice. Where needed, plan to adapt practice to enhance the environment and challenge bias.

- Discuss difficult incidents that arise in practice relating to equality, diversity or discrimination and explore new ideas on how to respond.

- Identify issues, for example, gender bias, that should be addressed and explore possible approaches.

Ongoing Support

- Staff members should have support from management and if necessary from the local County Childcare Committee or relevant organisations.

- Practitioners should support each other in working towards achieving the goals of a shared diversity and equality approach.

- Ensure time is allocated at every team meeting to discuss an aspect of diversity and equality during the first year of implementation.

- Motivate and encourage staff to become involved in a network with other childcare professionals.

3. Access to the Service

'Every child should know that he/she can make his/her home, his/her town, his/her county a better place for his/her being in it.' (Elschenbroich, 1999)

Why Are Access Issues Important?

To ensure all children have equal access to a service, policies on access must be developed and agreed by the management, staff and families. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2, states that all families have the right to equal access to services.

Points to Consider When Looking at Access to the Service

- Service providers have a duty to ensure they do not discriminate against people on the grounds of disability, marital status, race, family status, membership of the Travelling community, sexual orientation, religious belief, age and gender, *Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004.*

- There is evidence that families have been unintentionally and even intentionally excluded from childcare services and this may be in breach of the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004.

- When beginning to address diversity, equality and anti-discrimination issues every setting needs to look at its access policy. Identify barriers or difficulties that may affect families from minority groups or backgrounds.

- You may need to explain your access policy to families or staff who oppose access to families from minority groups. Clear policies are therefore very important, and an awareness of children's rights, legislation and access to relevant support organisations is invaluable in these circumstances.

How to Assess your Admissions Policy and Procedures

The questions below provide a thorough checklist for providers wishing to develop an open admission policy:

Knowledge of Diversity in the Neighbouring Community

- Are you aware of the diversity in the neighbouring community and is this reflected in the children and families attending the setting?
- Have you contacted the designated diversity and equality officer in the local City/County Childcare Committee, or relevant organisations about the particular needs of minority group children in the area?

Accessing Information about the Service

- How do families get to hear about the service? Would families who speak little or no English get to hear about the service?
- Is information about the service translated into other languages?
- Will families with literacy difficulties have access to information about the service, or have difficulties with usual procedures?
- Do you have a family handbook with policies clearly written or in pictorial form for families to gain information about the service?

Obtaining a Place in the Service

- Is there a waiting list? Is it a first come first served policy? Could this procedure discriminate or exclude some families (e.g. Traveller, asylum-seeker or other families recently moved to the area)?
- Does the access policy state what basis or criteria you use for giving priority in offering places? Is the policy available to families and can it be easily read?
- When demand exceeds supply, on what basis do you decide which child is offered a place?

Admissions/Enrolment Forms

- Will the admission /enrolment form require information that may cause difficulty or embarrassment for separated /divorced /lone parent families, gay or lesbian parents, for refugee or asylum seeker parents?

Access for Children with Disability

- Is the setting wheelchair friendly? Can children access the materials and equipment in the setting?
- Can you cater for children with visual, hearing or other physical, intellectual or emotional disabilities?

4. Equal Opportunities Recruitment

"Will children have the opportunity to form attachments with adults in our centres who reflect the diversity of the community?" Kenise Murphy Kilbride (1997)

Why Do We Need Equal Opportunities Recruitment?

Every service should have an equal opportunities recruitment policy to create inclusive and supportive childcare settings for all children. Providers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their recruitment procedures and conditions of employment do not discriminate on nine distinct grounds, as set out in the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004. These include: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, 'race', membership of the Travelling community.

Points to Consider when Looking at Equal Opportunities Recruitment

• The diversity of people in Irish society is not represented at all levels of the labour force and many groups have difficulty gaining entry into employment.

• Service providers have an obligation to contribute to making society more inclusive. Equal opportunities recruitment is part of that process.

• Childcare is not a career option just for women. The importance of children interacting with men in the childcare environment needs to be recognised.

Staff Members Sharing Similar Minority Groups to Children - The Benefits

• Children from different backgrounds and minority groups will be supported when a member of staff who shares their background, language, dialect, disability or circumstances is employed in the service.

• When children from working class backgrounds, minority ethnic children, Traveller children, or those with a disability see adults from their background in a position of leadership, they receive the message that people from their community can and do succeed.

• Having a diverse staff helps the entire team across cultural boundaries and promotes understanding of daily customs in each other's culture (food, music, infant care, nomadic lifestyle, comparisons with the majority culture).

• Other staff and children gain a first hand awareness and understanding of how discrimination works and how policy is formed.

• Fluency in a child's home language can facilitate communication with children and families. A bilingual staff member can help to foster a child's home language.

• A staff member who, for example, is a Traveller, will share insights on language, culture and discrimination and support Traveller children and families.

Steps You can Take in Developing an Equal Opportunities Recruitment Policy

1. Contact relevant agencies or organisations about equal opportunities recruitment (see Appendices for list).
2. Inform staff about the legal responsibility under the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004.
3. Management and staff should discuss how bias can arise in all stages of the recruitment procedure and how stereotyping can influence attitudes about people's abilities to perform a given job. The benefits of diversity amongst the team must also be addressed.
4. Carefully look at all recruitment arrangements. How are posts advertised? Are there creative ways to make job information more accessible to people from different backgrounds, genders and minority groups? For example, explore advertising approaches that encourage male participation. Look at the shortlisting and interviewing processes to identify any bias calling for change.
5. Produce an accessible information leaflet for families about the issues and responsibilities involved in equal opportunities recruitment (this can be part of a diversity and equality leaflet).
6. Consult families for their views on employing men, people from different backgrounds, people with disabilities, and other minority groups including new immigrants and Travellers. This consultation should be completed at policy development stage, in a context isolated from any particular job application.

Points to Note

*   Understanding the benefits of diversity within the team is not the same as saying we should select people simply because of their background or gender. Applicants must have professional skills or relevant experience and be willing to engage in training.
*   Job descriptions should require employees to be committed to the implementation of the policy on diversity and equality.
*   Affirmative action to ensure full equality in practice between employees is permitted under the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004. Such action can include measures to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to the discriminatory grounds including measures to help an under-represented sex to pursue a vocational activity.

5. Networking on Diversity and Equality

"This can serve as a way to exchange information, and teaching techniques, work on personal issues that arise during your teaching, and help to keep motivation high." Louise Derman Sparks & Carol Brunson Phillips (1997)

Why Do We Need to Consider Networking on Diversity and Equality?

Networking with a range of groups or organisations is very useful in helping practitioners begin developing the inclusion of a diversity and equality approach in their setting. Ongoing discussion and reflection on diversity issues will offer an opportunity to share successes and concerns, provide encouragement and facilitate planning strategies.

Practitioners can approach already existing childcare networks and request that diversity and equality issues be placed on the agenda or link with anti-racist networks in their areas. Another option is to set up a local network to support practitioners using a diversity and equality approach. Assistance may be available. (See Appendices).

Networking Allows Practitioners to:

- Ask critical questions such as:

    How have I come to do things this way in my work?

    How have I come to understand things this way?

    Who benefits from how I do and understand this?

    Who is silenced in how I do and understand this?

    How many other ways are there to do and understand this?

    Which of those ways might lead to more equitable and fair way of doing things and understanding things? (Glenda Mac Naughton, 2003)

- Increase knowledge and get ideas for developing new skills.

- Share how they have adapted their practice, explore approaches to different issues and source resources.

- Hear different perspectives and receive feedback from others on ideas they wish to develop.

- Discuss difficult issues and explore solutions.

Steps in setting up a local network on diversity and equality issues:

1. Contact other area childcare services, local childcare agencies or organisations, including the local County Childcare Committee, to generate interest. Talk to work colleagues and encourage support for the idea within the setting. Arrange a first meeting to include a guest expert speaker to get the ball rolling.

2. Source information on diversity, equality and anti-discrimination issues and legislation from statutory or voluntary organisations. (see Appendix)

3. Create an action plan to encourage continued attendance. Select a topic to discuss at each meeting, source information on the topic and explore it. Ask colleagues to document and share any incidents or questions relating to issues that arise in their work, for example, work with families, communication, language, skin colour, ethnicity, disability etc. (ensuring respect and confidentiality).

4. Allow time for knowledge and understanding to expand. Everyone will be at a different point in their learning. Ample time is essential to inform, explore and understand these complex issues, then find ways to support all children in achieving their full potential.

5. Members of minority groups are often asked to speak on behalf of their community. Seek support through a representative organisation. Be aware that if you ask individuals from minority groups to inform your service they are speaking as individuals and are not representative of their community's needs.

section **4.**

1. Partnership with Families

"Although professionals in many fields have invaluable contributions to make ...the expert on the individual child is that child's parents." Preschool Learning Alliance (No Date)

Why Do We Need to Work in Partnership with Families?

"People from different cultural backgrounds have differing ideas about what constitutes quality child care." Stacy York (1998)

Talking openly and listening to the views and concerns of families and children is essential for promoting respect for differences and in challenging discrimination. Establishing real dialogue between service providers and families will help bridge the gap between the home culture and the setting. In opening up discussions to seek and gain clarity, a shared understanding of diversity and equality practice will evolve to meet the needs of providers, children and their families.

Points to Keep in Mind Regarding Partnership with Families

Families and staff working together can support the development and implementation of a diversity and equality approach:

- Children, parents and other family members are the most knowledgeable about their background, culture, language and needs.

- Families (if they wish) can inform staff on how their individual cultures, religions or traditions can be depicted, valued, respected or celebrated.

- Discrimination must be understood from the viewpoint of the person experiencing it. The cumulative effect of everyday discrimination is very damaging to the self-esteem and wellbeing of families and children.

- Communication difficulties may arise due to language or cultural differences.

- All families, when involved in shaping the policy, will benefit from a shared understanding and commitment to implementing equality. Both the majority culture and minority groups gain from the process. (See section 3).

Getting Started

- Reflect on how existing contact with families is working.

- Host information and discussion sessions with families on diversity, equality and anti-discrimination issues. Ensure meetings are family friendly, accessible and culturally sensitive (in terms of time and days chosen, language, literacy, refreshments served, accessibility of information, etc)

- It may be necessary to create safe settings for families to have the opportunity to raise issues.

- Identify areas of concern to families.

- Provide information through formal and informal meetings, communicating the value (to the service and to each child's development) of the diversity and equality approach.

- Find out and use correct terminology when addressing people. If unsure, ask individuals or representative organisations which term is preferred to describe a minority group (e.g. Deaf, Black, Traveller etc).

- If you have identified family issues, seek their input. For example, ideas on how their child's culture, religion or language can be represented and supported. Families may not wish the service to depict their religion or culture.

- Ask families if there is anything in your work with them that could be altered to support communication or participation.

- Discuss with families why and how discriminatory incidents will be dealt with.

- Ensure the language you use when talking or writing to families is accessible and inclusive of diverse family structures; two-parent, lone parent, separated, gay or lesbian, adoptive, foster, extended or communal, inter-racial or those with a disability.

- Always maintain confidentiality in line with best practice.

Areas You May Need to Consider
- Families, in particular those who did not leave their country of origin by choice, may have experienced trauma, or be upset or depressed. Being dependent in an unfamiliar culture can be very difficult.

- When the culture and services are unfamiliar, families may feel nervous and isolated.

- Families seeking asylum or parents who are gay or lesbian may find it difficult to give personal information.

- Families may have different beliefs and attitudes concerning causes of illness or injury, or language to describe body parts, illness, symptoms, pain, or medical care.

- Parents of disabled children or disabled parent(s) of non-disabled children may not have come into contact with the diversity approach or social model (see Appendices) informing the organisation's practice. They will need to be informed and assured of the importance of depicting all children in the setting. Images and photos of disabled children or/and parents interacting with communities can promote assurance and recognition. 'Disability' is not necessarily a health issue.

- Some cultures may have different standards and expectations concerning discipline. Service providers need to reinforce that corporal punishment is not acceptable in Ireland.

- Body language may mean different things in different cultures. For example, making eye contact, shaking hands or using your first name can have differing connotations.

- How do you share information about the children's activities with families who may have literacy or English language difficulties? Be creative; use photographs and signs to communicate.

- Staff or families can find discussing difference or challenging discriminatory behaviour embarrassing or uncomfortable.

- Take care to explain the policy on dealing with illness and medical emergencies, using simple and non-medical language. Policy will need to be reviewed and

updated to reflect all the children's conditions. Families need to know they can share information within the bounds of confidentiality. Practitioners have to be open to input from families and to adapting policy.

- Interpreters may be needed. Be aware that where a family member acts as an interpreter, confidentiality may be an issue. It is not acceptable to use children as translators; alternatives should be sought where possible.

2. Settling-in Process

"For many... [ethnic minority] children the experiences and skills that they bring to the new setting suddenly become irrelevant or are not valued." Kenise Murphy Kilbride (1997)

Why Do We Need To Consider the Settling-in Process?

Every family can face challenges when settling into a new service, as each child must adjust from their home culture to the culture of the service. But children from different backgrounds and minority groups may face an extra challenge as they undergo this process. Their families will be introduced to a culture and educational approach generally based on the values and perspectives of the majority population. It is essential that such families feel confident that the settling in procedure will support and be appropriate to their child's needs.

Points to Keep in Mind when Looking at the Settling-in Process

- First impressions are very important.

- Treating children with equality does not mean treating all children the same.

- Many families face daily discrimination and may fear that their child will have a similar experience within the service.

- It is not sufficient to consult with one member of a minority community to understand the needs of the whole community. Individual needs will be different.

- Communication barriers can affect the settling process for families and children. Non-verbal communication can mean different things in different cultures. (see Section 1 on Working in Partnership with Families)

- If the environment shows diverse family backgrounds, languages and cultures, families will feel welcome and the first steps will have been taken in building trust.

How to Get Started

To help families and children from all communities settle in easily, it's a good idea to examine current admissions forms, settling-in procedures and reflect on communication styles.

Childcare practitioners will need accurate personal information to support each child settling in. It is important to show respect and sensitivity when asking for such details. Explain how this information will help provide a better service for the child. However, families have a right to decide whether they feel comfortable sharing information.

Step One: The Family

When a new family or child is starting in the childcare service, staff should know:

- The minority ethnic background of the family.
- The correct terms used to describe the different minority groups in the setting.
- The language spoken in a child's home.
- The family structure (e.g. separated, divorced, lone-parent).
- The religious faith of the family and associated key beliefs to be aware of and respected.
- The type of disability and any relevant information. People with disability regard prejudice, social and physical barriers as exclusionary, not the medical aspects, as the biggest disability.
- If the child must avoid particular foods for health, religious or lifestyle reasons.
- Their living accommodation (trailer/halting-site/house/high-rise/flat/temporary/nomadic etc.).

Step Two: The Setting

- Does the setting support the settling in process?
- Will the child see his or her background or minority group (e.g. culture, language, family structure, ethnicity, skin colour, disability represented visibly i.e. in posters, pictures in books etc.)?
- Can the staff pronounce (and spell) the child's and family names correctly?
- Are there culturally different hygiene routines, times or ways of eating or sleeping that staff need to know about?
- Do our routine activities only reflect the majority culture, and can these be re-designed to reflect the new diversity in the group?
- Can the approach used in the service be adapted to accommodate the needs of a child with a culturally different learning style?
- Can I identify and deal with discriminatory incidents immediately?

Communication

Information about the service (including posters and signs) and the progress of the child will need to be accessible to all families, with particular consideration given to families with literacy difficulties. Translate where possible; use pictures to initiate conversations and to provide information to families on the progress of the child. Bilingual families, including Irish speakers, may be willing to help with translations; however, it is not appropriate to use children for translation purposes.

Childcare services and relevant laws differ from country to country. Families from other countries may need you to explain, where you can, about Irish childcare services, about different laws and processes that affect children in Ireland, such as the Child Care Act 1991.

section 5.

1. The Physical Environment

"How well does the content of classroom pictures, posters, games and other materials represent real people?" Janet Brown McCracken (1993)

Why Do We Need to Consider the Physical Environment?

The physical environment offers first impressions to families and children and can play an important role building each child's individual and group identity and breaking down fears and misinformation about difference. The physical environment should communicate that diversity is valued and respected. What is not represented in the physical environment is as powerful in influencing children's attitudes as what is represented. Physical elements can also promote awareness and understanding of difference and make a statement about the educational approach.

However, providing a rich, diverse environment alone will not change attitudes or support children becoming comfortable with difference. Every aspect of the programme will need to actively address diversity issues, using the environment as a working tool.

Points to Keep in Mind when Considering the Physical Environment

- The physical environment sets the scene for all children to be valued and for discussing diversity and equality issues with children.
- Children rely on adults to provide the necessary physical environment for development and learning.
- It is important to provide a rich, accurate non-stereotypic environment about gender, 'race', culture, ethnicity, disability etc.
- Responding to children's play comments while they are interacting with the materials forms the basis of diversity and equality practice.
- A child whose background, language and culture are not represented in the environment may feel less confident, less comfortable and less able to participate.
- An environment which depicts all children can offer reassurance to families that their child will be given due recognition and have equal status.
- Bear in mind that settings composed entirely of majority children also have diversity and this should be reflected in the environment.

Assessing the Environment

Creating an environment which represents all children in the setting, along with the wider community, is the first step in implementing a diversity and equality approach. To get started you will need to learn how to critically examine the environment for positive and negative messages such as stereotypic images and inaccuracies for gender, skin colour, class, ethnicity, religion, family structure, living arrangements, home languages, disability and culture:

Look at:

- All the imagery on the walls, play materials, jigsaws, food, toys, books.

- Labelling of environment and equipment. Keep in mind language and literacy issues.

- Images, text and language in children's books. What messages are we giving or not giving through the literature we provide?

- If necessary environmental adaptations are needed (e.g. for sensory exploration) for children with visual impairments or with a disability.

- Accessibility of information for families and children. Keep in mind language and literacy issues, plus access formats such as audio, Braille and availability of staff able to communicate through sign language.

- General layout and accessibility of the environment for children with a disability.

- Storage and access to materials for all children.

Next Steps

- Assess what images will be appropriate. Begin by ensuring that all the children, families and staff in your programme are reflected and represented in their daily life, home, family type and group they belong to. If the children come from a similar background, reflect their lives and the diversity in the wider community and society.

- If you are not sure, find out how to proof the setting. Talk with the County Childcare Committee in your area or consult with relevant organisations (see Appendices).

- Identify any tokenism or stereotypes that can be eliminated immediately.

- Find out where you can source toys and materials to represent and support children's individual and group identities (see useful websites and resource list in Appendices)

- List additional materials or equipment you think would improve the environment.

- Find out if there are any bilingual staff or families willing to help to develop materials in different home languages e.g. a recording of a story, song or rhyme in a different language so children can listen to the tape while looking at the book, or words in other languages pasted into scrapbooks.

Making Changes

- Introduce one change at a time. Observe the children playing with the new equipment, take note of any unusual responses.

- Take note of any comments, views or effects of the changes on staff or parents. Readjust practice if necessary to support learning for all involved.

Points to Note

- Ensure that different family structures, Travellers and people with a disability are represented, regardless of the composition of the setting.

- It is important to portray minority groups as they live today, as the majority culture is portrayed, and not in an old fashioned traditional way or just at festival time.

- It is important to portray historical, cultural images and people who have contributed to the community and wider society, past and present. Ask representative organisations or families for help; often this information on minority people is not readily available.

- Providing toys or images familiar to an individual child can foster a sense of belonging. Items that represent diversity (such as a child's sari amongst the dress-up clothes, or a jigsaw of a halting site) can raise issues or prompt questions or discussion with children, which may require adult intervention.

Ideas to Support Working with the Children

The environment should contain numerous materials/activities to support the inclusion of diversity and equality within the setting. When developing some of the ideas suggested below, think ahead to children's possible reactions and consider responses to issues that could arise.

- Display tapes of children's songs in a variety of languages, including the Irish and English language. Play tapes with music from different cultures to the children.

- Keep art materials handy to provide opportunities for the children to draw, colour and talk about their images, using a range of skin tones in pencils, markers or paints. Mirrors are useful.

- Display photographs of all the children and their families at child level to prompt discussion with children about differences (e.g. physical appearance, family structures, clothes, homes etc.). Practitioners can improvise and make their own resources to reflect the children in the setting, e.g. photographs of children can be laminated on cardboard and made into jigsaws.

- Have on hand children's books that provide everyday images of diverse people and lives. Consider gender and the roles given to males and females in books. Look for books with children and families from minority groups that depict present-day reality in Ireland and other countries. Books should include parents from all backgrounds.

- Build up a library of children's dual language books (including Braille / non-Braille) and books in the home language of the children attending.

- Provide musical instruments from different countries and cultures.

- Transform the home corner to represent the daily reality of the children in the group and of the local community (e.g. it can become a 'chipper' or a trailer on a halting site).

- Provide props for dramatic play that reflect the reality of children's home backgrounds, e.g. disability aids, cooking utensils.

- Remember to reflect diversity and equality even if the members of the group do not immediately appear to represent diverse backgrounds. For example, for a child with a visual impairment, consistency of layout would be an important factor. Reflective strips along the edges of furniture and padded corners may be helpful. Also important are Braille and textured books, books featuring characters with spectacles and dolls with glasses and white sticks.

- Practitioners are important role models and children will actively learn from them how to behave and communicate respectfully towards others.

2. Gender Factors

Children learn to recognise and understand about gender difference in the preschool years, including what is expected of boys and girls. A significant factor in daily life, gender influences how children learn and operate in the childcare setting. It also influences how they think, feel, behave, communicate, dress, play, choose activities, choose playmates, use physical space and negotiate social relationships. All that children do, think and say - their values, beliefs, language, emotion, imagination and style of communication are influenced by gender. Children can limit their vision of themselves and others, and the way they act for themselves and with others, on the basis of gender, often recreating sexist relationships in play.

For these reasons, gender is an over-arching category for evaluation when observing children. If we do not want children to believe that boys/girls and men/women have different areas or levels of competence, practitioners must be aware of gender politics in play and challenge what children do and say. It's easy to be blind to sexism in children's behaviour; we may only discover the extent of it when we do systemic observations to evaluate gender bias.

Good Practice Should Involve:

- Gathering clear and up-to-date relevant information on gender dynamics between children.

- Improving the ability to recognise sexism in children's play and interaction –use team exercises and discussion.

- Understanding the significance of gender in children's development.

- Preparing to challenge sexist attitudes and behaviour.

- Ensuring all children's books are gender-neutral and that anti-sexist books are also provided.

- Promoting gender equity in interactions with children.

section **6.**

1.   Religion and Festivals

Why Do We Need to Consider Religion?

"A positive approach to understanding religious belief is part of good practice in work with children...However many workers are uncertain how to approach this area uneasy about a suitable balance between personal commitment and an open approach to children's learning. " Jenny Lindon (1999)

Religion is an important part of identity for many families. Practitioners need to discuss this with families to ensure they are respecting their traditions and faith. Children should never feel excluded because of their religion or beliefs, or be required to participate in activities associated with a religion to which they do not belong.

While Ireland is a predominantly Catholic country, there are a variety of faiths present in Irish society and some families are not affiliated with, or choose not to practice, any religion. The right of children of minority communities to practice their own religion is enshrined in Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Religious traditions are important in many children's lives and often feature in childcare learning activities. Celebration of traditional festivals can be very enriching; however, practitioners should consult families, who may have a view about whether their child should participate in organised celebrations associated with a religion to which they do not belong.

Ideas for Respecting the Religion and Beliefs of Families

- In your service leaflet, state that the setting is inclusive and respectful of all children and if families have religious issues or concerns they are welcome to discuss them with staff.

- Families should have an input regarding policy on these issues (see Section 3 on Policy).

- Find out about the religious affiliations of the children's families. Do not make assumptions about religious affiliations amongst indigenous or immigrant populations.

- Families need to be told if a Christian festival is going to be celebrated. Families should feel comfortable about approaching staff if they do not want their child to participate. Work out with families satisfactory alternatives for their children.

- Consult with families from minority religions to ensure festivals associated with their religions are also celebrated. For example, if a child has just experienced a week of festivals at home, it is important that they feel their experience is valued in the setting. Discuss with the family and keep it simple. Invite family members to come in and show aspects of their celebration if you do not feel you have the knowledge.

- In giving children information about religions and festivals it is important to do this in a way they can understand.

- Children need to know if it is a Christian festival they are celebrating, as well as any other religious festivals.

- Celebrate festivals that relate to the children in the setting so they are more meaningful.

- The everyday reality of people's daily life also needs to be discussed, to avoid children thinking this is how others live all the time.

- Work with families to create a calendar showing important days of religious significance.

- All children attending should feel represented and affirmed. Find books which reflect the particular faiths of their families.

- At general meetings make an effort to provide appropriate snacks for those with minority dietary requirements (ask families to help out).

- Management must ensure that staff respect the food preferences and beliefs of families at all times. This may require in-service training on an ongoing basis and good working policies and procedures.

Banning festivals is not the answer; using them as teachable moments is a more positive approach. No child should feel excluded, however banning all festivals will only result in excluding all the children. While practitioners are not responsible for educating children about different beliefs, they can open up possibilities and offer a range of ideas and experiences relevant to different faiths, at all times supporting each child's identity and promoting respect.

2. Child-Rearing Traditions and Discipline

"Now I feel more relaxed with them because they know that I am a Traveller, and I don't have to put posh talk on with them. They don't judge me; they just respect me for what I am." Mary McDonagh (1995).

Why do We Need to Consider the Child Rearing Traditions and Discipline

Childcare practitioners can sometimes assume that their familiar way is the best or right approach to care for children. It is important to stand back, take a more objective view, and be aware that different child-rearing practices are equally valid. Team discussion about childcare or parenting approaches is vital for raising awareness. The level of understanding about child-rearing traditions has important implications for children's wellbeing and may influence the approach taken with a particular child or minority group.

Aspects of Child-rearing that May Differ Between Cultures

- Children's role and responsibility in the family.
- How families talk to children.
- Child's attachment and separation from parent or family member.
- Gender identity and traditional sex roles.
- Expected developmental milestones.
- Discipline.
- How families show affection.
- Diet and mealtime routines.
- Toilet training.
- Acceptance of, meaning of and response to crying.
- Dress and hair care.
- Illness and remedies.
- Sleep pattern and bedtime routines.

It is very helpful for staff and families to explore culturally different values and priorities together. Although there may be areas of disagreement, much will be learned and families are reassured their traditions will be respected. However, it is vital to have a mechanism in place for raising and resolving issues. This should involve a process for agreement between the two parties. To address any issues, service providers should work with families to build up resource material.

By working in partnership with the service, families know they will always have a space for expressing their issues, concerns and points of view.

Discipline

Culturally different approaches to discipline often arise as an issue in the childcare context. Ideas of what is acceptable or expected within one culture can vary significantly compared to another. A child's apparent misbehaviour should always be viewed in the context of his or her home culture.

In terms of discipline, consistency between home and the childcare setting should be the aim, so that a child does not have to cope with two different regimes. However when the discipline approach in the setting is different to that of the home, this can be explained to a child in a way that does not undermine that child's cultural/family background: 'at home you can do X, but in here we do Y '.

The issue of physical punishment is one area where culturally different standards about what is considered acceptable or unacceptable may give rise to confusion, uncertainty or concern. Respecting a child's cultural background does not necessarily translate into respecting all the practices of the culture. The paramount importance of child protection is not to be compromised. Rules and indeed laws may need to be explained to all families, especially those not familiar with Irish legislation such as the Child Care Act 1991.

"Discrimination and its effects in young children's lives is not inevitable, but it is likely if there is no effective, long-term intervention in the early years that supports early childhood staff to own and want change."
Glenda Mac Naughton' (2006)

appendices

Useful Terminology

Activism For adults, involves recognising injustice and working to create positive change. For children, it involves learning to take action against unfair behaviours.

Anti-Racism An activist approach or policy that aims to challenge and combat racism in all its forms: institutional, individual, behavioural and attitudinal.

Assimilation Assimilationist approaches are based on the assumption that it is natural and/or desirable for the minority group or subordinate group to adjust to the values and norms of the majority or dominant group. The culture of the minority/subordinate group is denied and viewed as inferior (Platform Against Racism: *Glossary of Terms*).

Asylum-seeker An immigrant who has applied for refugee status on the grounds that they fear persecution in their country of origin, or because their life and liberty is threatened by armed conflict or violence. Asylum seeker status is temporary while a claim for refugee status is processed. Asylum seekers have limited rights. They are not illegal immigrants.

Bias Having a preferred point of view, attitude or feeling about a person or group. Can be positive or negative.

Bigot Person who is prejudiced in their views and intolerant of the opinions of others.

Black A term chosen by people from many African, African-Caribbean, and Asian/South-Asian people to describe and distinguish themselves in terms of solidarity against racism. (The term 'people of color' is used in the U.S. to refer to people who experience discrimination and racism on the basis of visible skin colour.)

Black Irish Someone who maybe born in Ireland/have Irish citizenship/hold an Irish passport, and is also visually black and could experience discrimination on the grounds of skin colour.

'Coloured' Outdated term that should be avoided as it is generally viewed as offensive to many Black people. The terms Black or Mixed heritage, where appropriate, are preferred.

Culture Everybody has a culture. It involves a sense of belonging, a shared understanding and identity. Culture is the way we learn to think, communicate and behave. While we are born into a culture, it is nevertheless learned rather than given.

Culturally Appropriate Describes a childcare practice/approach, or materials/resources that are designed or used to minimise exclusion, support individual children's identity, promote respect and foster inclusive practice.

Disability

a) the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence or a part of a person's body, (b) the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness, (c) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body, (d) a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or (e) a condition, disease or illness which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour. This is the definition used in the EEA/ESA (and the Education Act) and is deliberately broad-ranging to suit the anti-discrimination context.

Discrimination

Policies, practice or behaviour that lead to unfair treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of their identity or perceived identity. It can be intentional or unintentional, and may be direct or indirect.

Diversity

Describes the diverse nature of society. It includes, for example, social class, gender, family status, returned Irish emigrants, the many minority groups as well as the majority group.

Diversity Education

A range of educational approaches that address the issue of diversity and equality.

Emigrant

Person who has left their country of origin (e.g. Ireland) to live and work abroad.

Equality

The importance of recognising different individual needs and ensuring equity in terms of access, participation and outcomes for all children and their families. It is not about treating all children the same.

Equality-proofing

Screening of policies, procedures, information and materials as well as the physical environment and curriculum activities to ensure that every child can participate on equal terms, eliminating bias, stereotyping and discrimination, and giving priority to equality considerations.

Equal Opportunities

The right of access for every child and family, full participation in early childhood services and equitable outcomes between groups.

Equity

Fairness both institutionally and individually. In the Irish context the term 'equality' is usually used.

Ethnic

Used to describe minority ethnic people or things (e.g. in context of traditional dress, food, shops, hair products etc.) and used as such it may fail to acknowledge that we all have ethnicity.

Ethnic Group

"Is an involuntary group which shares a common ancestry, culture, history, tradition and sense of belonging or peoplehood and that is a political and economic interest group. Ethnicity is a way of categorising people on the basis of self-identification and ascription by others" (Platform against Racism: *Glossary of Terms*). The term 'ethnic group' may refer to those from minority or majority groups in society.

Gender-bias	Attitudes, opinions, messages, encouragement, organised activities, or design of play materials, that, being unequal for boys and girls, influences unequal preferences, use or participation between boys and girls.
Immigrant	Describes someone who has left their home country and arrived in another to live or work.
Identity	Is an internal concept of who you are, how you regard yourself and how others see you. It involves what you have in common with others and what makes you different.
Indigenous	Describes people who are native to the country in which they are living (e.g. Aborigines in Australia; Native American Indians in the USA)
Inclusion	A process involving a programme, curriculum or educational environment where each child is welcomed and included on equal terms, can feel they belong and can progress to his/her full potential in all areas of development.
Institutional Racism	Racial discrimination which has been incorporated into the structures, processes or procedures of organisations, either because of racial prejudice or due to a failure to take into account the particular needs of Black and minority ethnic people. Institutions have power to sustain and promote racial injustice by providing opportunities for some people and not others, by providing career advancement, training, influence, promoting self respect etc. Institutional racism occurs where the activities, practices, policies or laws of an institution lead, intentionally or unintentionally, to less favourable outcomes for minority ethnic groups.
Majority Group	The predominant culture in society (e.g. white, settled, Catholic, able-bodied etc.)
Minority Ethnic	Groups who are identifiably different from the ethnic majority. May be long established in Ireland or newly arrived.. See definition of 'ethnic group' which refers to those from both minority and majority groups.
Minority Group	Any minority community or culture within society such as Traveller, Chinese, Jewish, disabled etc.
Mixed Heritage	Refers to a person whose parents or family identify with more than one cultural heritage.
Multicultural	A recognition of the many minority cultures within a society. Also refers to an educational approach that includes looking at minority cultural experience.
Negro	An outdated term with racist and colonialist connotations to refer to Black people.
Participation	Being involved at all levels of a process, and at all stages, from inception to evaluation. Being consulted as to your views and ensuring that all views are heard and given due consideration. Effective participation is a process through which stakeholders influence initiatives, resources and decisions which will affect them.

Prejudice
Prejudice involves pre-judgment and the formation of opinion without regard for evidence or reason. Prejudice is a negative belief about or attitude towards a person who belongs to a group, simply because she/he belongs to that group and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable characteristics ascribed to the group (Platform against Racism: *Glossary of Terms*).

'Race'
A socio-political concept which categorises people into biologically distinct, superior or inferior species or 'races' and has been used to justify cruelty, exploitation and discrimination, but in fact has no scientific basis. There is only one human race.

Racism
"Any theory which involves the claim that racial or ethnic groups are inherently superior or inferior, thus implying that some would be entitled to dominate or eliminate others presumed to be inferior, or which bases value judgments on racial differentiation, has no scientific foundation and is contrary to the moral and ethical principles of humanity." (UNESCO general conference, 27 November 1978, Declaration on race and racial prejudice).

Refugee
A person outside of his or her country of origin, who, on the basis of personal circumstances including fear of persecution, has attained the legal status 'refugee' as stipulated in the 1951 Geneva Convention.

Sexism
Any attitude, action or institutional practice that oppresses or undermines people because of their gender.

Special Educational Needs
A child has special educational needs (SEN) if he or she has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child has a learning difficulty if he/she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age or has a condition or impairment that prevents or hinders the child from using educational facilities or materials.

Stereotype
An over-simplified generalisation about a particular group, 'race' or sex, based on widely held assumptions, presenting a rigid view that can be difficult to change.

Traveller
Member of the Traveller community, which is a minority group with a shared language, heritage and nomadic culture. 'Membership of the Traveller community' is one of the nine grounds upon which it is illegal to discriminate under the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004. This Act defines 'Traveller community' as "the community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland."

Values
Qualities that an individual or group believes to be important and worthwhile for themselves and for others. Values guide your goals, choices and how you live and work. Values are personal; you acquire your values growing up within your home culture, and they will be different depending on that culture.

Visible Minority	Term used increasingly to describe groups or individuals with visible characteristics (including skin colour) that identify them, within a context, as belonging to a group other than the majority.
Xenophobia	Describes extreme feelings of fear or hostility towards outsiders, expressed through attitudes, views or actions in response to individuals or groups from a different national, ethnic, religious or cultural background.

This glossary has been prepared with particular reference to early childhood care and education.

Useful contacts on Diversity and Equality Issues

Each of the contacts listed below has symbols to indicate resources available on diversity and equality issues.

Symbol   Resource

●	Free information booklets
❑	Useful publications
▲	Materials and resources for children
❤	Training related to minority interest group(s)
■	Specialised training in relation to Diversity / Equality / Anti-bias / Anti-racism

Republic of Ireland

Access Ireland refugee integration project: Dominick Court, 41 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 878 0589, E-mail: info@accessireland.ie, Website: www.accessireland.ie ● ❑ ❤ ■

Amnesty International: 8 Shaw Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 677 6361, E-mail: info@amnesty.ie, Website: www.amnesty.ie ● ❑ ■

Forbairt Naíonraí Teo (An Comhchoiste Réamhscolaíochta Teo): 7 Cearnóg Mhuirfean, Baile Átha Cliath 2. Tel: 01 639 8449, E-mail: comhchoiste@eircom.net ● ❑ ▲ ❤

An Gúm: 44 Sr. Uí Chonaill Uacht, Baile Átha Cliath 1. Fón: 01 809 5034 Ríomhphost: gum@educ.irlgov.ie ▲

An Siopa Leabhar, Conradh na Gaelige: 6 Harcourt Street, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 478 3814, E-mail: ansiopaleamhar@eircom.net, Website: www.cnag.ie ▲

Barnardos: National Children's Resource Centre. Tel: 01 454 9699 E-mail ncrc@barnardos.ie, Website: www.barnardos.ie ● ❑ ▲ ■

Blackrock Teacher's Education Centre: Kill Avenue, DunLaoire, Co. Dublin.
Tel 01 230 0977, E-mail: bec@blackrock-edu.ie, Website: www.blackrock-edu.ie
❏ ▲

Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE): Gate Lodge
St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9. Tel: 01 884 2110,
E-mail: early.childhhod@spd.dcu.ie, Website: www.cecde.ie ● ❏

Children's Rights Alliance: 13 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 405 4823,
E-mail: info@cra.iol.ie, Website: www.cra.ie ● ❏ ▲ ■

**City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) Curriculum
Development Unit:** Sundrive Road, Dublin 12. Tel: 01 453 5487, E-mail: info@cdu.
cdvec.ie, Website: www.curriculum.ie ● ❏ ▲ ■

Comhlámh: 10 Upper Camden Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 478 3490,
E-mail: info@comhlamh.org, Website: www.comhlamh.org ● ❏ ❤ ■

Concern Worldwide: 52-55 Camden Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 417 7700,
E-mail: info@concern.net, Website: www.concern.net ● ❏ ▲

**Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform, Equal Opportunities
Programme:** 72-76 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 602 8475,
E-mail: childcare_mail@justice.ie, Website: www.justice.ie ● ❏

**Development Education Unit (DEU) (formerly known as National Committee
for Development Education):** Bishop's Square, Redmond's Hill, Dublin 2.
Tel: 01 478 9456, E-Mail: info@ncde.ie, Website: www.dci.gov.ie ● ❏ ▲ ■

Educate Together: H8a Centrepoint, Oak Drive, Dublin 12. Tel: 01 429 2500,
E-mail Info@educatetogether.ie, Website: www.educatetogether.ie ● ■

éist Project: Pavee Point, 46 North Great Charles St, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 878 0255
ext.113. E-mail: pavee@iol.ie, Website: www.paveepoint.ie ● ❏ ▲ ❤ ■

IBBY Ireland (Guide to multicultural books): 20 Rathgar Road, Dublin 6.
Tel: 492 3333, Email: books@obrien.ie, Website: www.obrien.ie ❏

Irish National Teacher's Association (INTO): 35 Parnell Square, Dublin.
Tel: 01 872 2533, E-mail: info@into.ie, Website: www.into.ie ● ❏ ■

IPPA: The Early Childhood Organisation, Unit 4, Broomhill Business Complex,
Broomhill Road Tallaght, Dublin 24. Tel: 01 463 0010, E-mail: info@ippa.ie,
Website: www.ippa.ie ❏ ❤ ■

Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Children: 20 Molesworth Street,
Dublin 2. Tel: 01 679 4944, E-Mail: ispcc@ispcc.ie, Website: www.ispcc.ie ● ▲

Lisheen Toys (producer of Traveller jigsaws): Ballyheigue, Co. Kerry,
Tel: 066 7133 436 ▲

Metroeireann (Multicultural Newspaper): 213 North Circular Road, Dublin 7.
Tel: 01 869 0670, Website: www.metroeireann.com ❏

National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI):
NCCRI, 26 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 478 5777, E-mail: nccri@eircom.net,
Website: www.nccri.com ● ❏ ■

National Disability Authority (NDA): 25 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge Dublin 4.
Tel: 01 608 0400, E-mail: nda@nda.ie, Website: www.nda.ie ● ❏ ▲ ❤

Pavee Point: 46 North Great Charles St, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 878 0255 ext.113.
E-mail: pavee@iol.ie, Website: www.paveepoint.ie ● ❏ ▲ ❤ ■

The Equality Authority: 2 Clonmel Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01 417 3333,
Lo Call 1890 245545, Text phone: 01 417 3385, E-mail: info@equality.ie,
Website: www.equality.ie ● ❏

Treoir: Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children: 14
Gandon House, Custom House Square, IFSC, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 670 0120,
E-mail: info@treoir.ie, Website: www.treoir.ie ● ❏ ❤

Trócaire Resource Centre: 12 Cathedral Street, Dublin 1. Tel: 01 874 3875,
E-mail: info@cs.trocaire.org, Website: www.trocaire.org ● ❏ ▲

Udaras na Gaeltachta Na Forbacha: Gaillimh Tel: 091 503100,
E-mail: eolas@udaras.ie, Website: www.udaras.ie ● ▲

Wesco Ireland: Unit 3 &4 Liosbaun Industrial Estate, Tuam Road, Galway.
Tel: 091 756 301 ▲

Northern Ireland Contacts

Community Relations Council (NI): 6 Murray Street, Belfast, BT169DN.
Tel: 0044 28 902 27500, E-mail: info@community-relations.org.uk
Website: www.community-relations.org ● ❏ ■

Chinese Welfare Association: Tel: 0044 28 902 88277

**Northern Ireland Pre-school Playgroup Association (NIPPA) Media
Initiative:** Website www.mifc.pii.org

**Northern Ireland Pre-school Playgroup Association (NIPPA) Traveller Toy
Box Project:** Website:www.nippa.org

Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities: Tel: 0044 28 902 44639

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE): 10 Upper
Crescent, Belfast T71NT. Tel: 0044 28 902 36200, E-mail: info@nicie.org.uk,
Website: www.nicie.org ● ❏ ■

Save the Children: 15 Richmond Park, Belfast BT10 OHB.
Tel: 0044 28 904 31123, E-mail: niinfo@scfuk.org.uk, Website: www.scf.co.uk ● ❏

Great Britain Contacts

AIMER: Bulmershe Court, Earley, Reading, RG6 IHJ Tel: 0044 1 8931 8820,
Website: www.ralic.rdg.ac.uk ▲

Centre for Multi-cultural Education: Forest Lodge Education Centre, Charnor
Road, Leicester, LE3 6LH. Tel: 0044 1 62331 3399, E-mail: marybryceland@
hotmail.com ▲

ClearVision: Linden Lodge School, 61 Princes Way, London SW19 6JB.
Website: www.rnib.org.uk/clrvis/clearvis.htm ▲

Early Years Equality (formerly known as EYTARN): PO Box 28, Wallesey L45
9NP. Tel: 0044 151 639 1778, E-mail: eytarn@lineone.net ● ❏ ■

Equality Learning Centre: 356 Holloway Road, London, N7 6PA.
Tel: 0044 171 700 8127 ❑ ■

Haringey Traveller Education Team: The Lodge Church Lane, London N17 8BX
Tel: 0044 208 808 7604 ▲

Kidsactive: Pryor's Bank, Bishop's Park, London SW6 3LA.
Tel: 004420 7731 1435, E-mail: ntis@kidsactive.org.uk,
Website: www.kidsactive.org.uk ▲

Knockabouts (Supplier of Traveller Toys): 23 Wheatacres, Thetford, Norfolk
1P24 1AR, Tel: 0044 18 427 2560 ▲

Letterbox Library: Unit 2D, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP.
Tel: 004471 226 1633, E-mail: info@letterboxlibrary.com
Website: www.Letterboxlibrary.com ▲

Mantra Publishing: 5 Alexandra Grove, London N12 8NU.
Tel: 0044 20 8445 5123, E-mail: mishti@mantrapublishing.com,
Website: www.mantrapublishing.com ▲

National Children's Bureau (NCB): 8 Wakley Street, London ECV 7QE.
Tel: 0044 20 7843 6000 E-mail: info@ncb.org.uk Website: www.ncb.org.uk
● ❑ ■

National Early Years Network: 77 Holloway Road, London N7 8JZ.
Tel: 0044 71 584 6464, E-mail: info@neyn.org.uk,Website: www.neyn.org.uk
● ❑

Oxfam Educational Materials: 274 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7D2, UK. ▲

Persona Doll Training: 51 Granville Road, London N12 OJH, U.K.
Tel: 0044 20 8446 7056, Email: personadoll@ukgateway.net ● ❑ ▲ ■

Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA): 6 Kings Cross Road, London WC 1X 9L.
Tel: 0044 207 833 0991 E-mail: pla@pre-school.org.uk ● ❑ ❤ ■

Save The Children: 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD. Tel: 0044 171 703 5400
E-mail: publications@scfuk.org.uk, Website: www.savethechildren.org.uk ● ❑ ▲

Soma Books Ltd: 38 Kennington Lane, London SSE11 4LS, UK. Tel: 0044 020
7735 2101, E-mail: books@somabooks.co.uk ▲

Working Group Against Racism in Children's Resources (WGARCR): 460
Wandsworth Rd. London SW8 3LX, Tel: 0044 020 7627 4594 ● ❑

International Contacts

Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training (DECET): Tel: 003 29
2324 735, Website: www.decet.org ● ❑ ■

Early Childhood Equity Alliance (ECEA): 1403 34th Ave, Seattle, WA 98122
USA, Tel: 001206 324 4744, Email: info@rootsforchange.net, Website: www.
rootsforchange.net ❑ ■

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): 1509
16th Street, N. W. Washington, DC 20036-1426, Tel: 202 232 8777,
E-mail: naeyc@naeyc.org, Website: www.naeyc.org ● ❑ ▲ ❤ ■

Redleaf Press: 450 North Syndicate, Suite 5, St.Paul, Minnesota 55104-4125, USA. Tel: 800 423 8309, Fax: 800 641 0115, Website: www.redleafpress.org ❏

UNICEF: Website: www.unicef.org ● ❏ ▲

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The Legislative Framework

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. The Convention recognises and stipulates children's basic human rights, including their civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights and their right to protection from abuse and exploitation. The Convention sets forth the minimum standards necessary for the wellbeing of every child. It also imposes obligations on the ratifying States Parties to undertake specific actions to ensure full realisation by children of the rights outlined in the Convention. A child is defined in the

Convention as a person under the age of eighteen years.

Four principles are basic to the implementation of the Convention:

- Respect for the best interests of the child. (Article 3)

- The right of all children to life, survival and development. (Article 6)

- Participation: the right of all children to express their views freely on all matters affecting them. (Article 12)

- Non-discrimination: the right of all children to enjoy all the rights in the Convention without discrimination. (Article 2)

Article 2 provides for non-discrimination and equality by obligating States Parties to "respect and ensure the rights set forth in the...Convention...without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status."

Other articles of relevance are:

- Children have the right to have a name from birth and to be granted a nationality. (Article 7)

- The State has an obligation to protect children from all forms of maltreatment perpetrated by parents or others responsible for their care. (Article 19)

- The State is obliged to provide special protection for children who are Refugees or seeking Refugee status. (Article 22)

- Children with a physical disability or learning difficulties have the right to special care, education and training, designed to help them to achieve the greatest possible self-reliance and to lead a full active life in society. (Article 23)

- Children have the right to education. (Article 28)

- Education should be directed at developing the child's personality and talents, fostering respect for basic human rights; developing respect for the child's own cultural and national values and those of others. (Article 29)

- Children of minority communities and indigenous peoples have the right to enjoy their own culture, to practice their own religion and to use their own language. (Article 30)

- Children have the right to rest and to engage in leisure, play and recreational activities and to participate in cultural and artistic activities. (Article 31)

UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1963)

The principles of this were elaborated into the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)*. Today 147 states are parties to this convention, ratified by Ireland in 2000.

Art. 7: Education and Information, states that "Governments should take immediate and effective action in the fields of teaching, education, culture, and information to combat racial prejudice and to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and among different racial and ethnic groups".

The Constitution of Ireland

The Constitution of Ireland, which came into force in December 1937, contains several acknowledgements of diversity and equality. Article 40 states that "All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law." In particular, the Constitution stresses religious freedom: "Freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion are, subject to public order and morality, guaranteed to every citizen . . . The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief or status." (Article 44).

Under the Constitution, the parents are the natural educators of the child: "The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children" (Article 42).

Irish Anti-Discrimination Legislation

1998: The Employment Equality Act

Makes discrimination in employment unlawful on nine grounds: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Travelling community. The Act covers access to employment, conditions of employment, equal pay, promotion, training and work experience, all of which is relevant to employment within the childcare sector.

2000: The Equal Status Act

Prohibits discrimination in the provision of goods, services, disposal of property and access to education, on any of the nine grounds referred to under the Employment Equality Act 1998. It prohibits discrimination in all public and private services (subject to some exceptions) including educational establishments. Educational institutions have a duty, subject to some exceptions, not to discriminate in terms of admission, access, terms or conditions and expulsion.

2004: The Equality Act

The Equality Act 2004 amended the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000 to align these Acts with new EU Equality Directives.

2005: The Disability Act

The Disability Act 2005 is a cross-Departmental measure which promotes equality and social inclusion for people with disabilities with particular provisions governing access to services and employment and the assessment of health and educational needs. "Disability" is defined as "a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment".

2000: Education (Welfare) Act

Obliges schools to have written Codes of Practice, to be shown to parents on enrolment of children. These must honour the provisions of the Equal Status Act 2000 as they apply to schools. The Act provides an education-specific legal basis for anti-racism, inclusionary policies and codes of practice.

2003: The Official Languages Act

The primary objective is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish. This will be achieved by placing a statutory obligation on departments of State and Public Bodies to make specific provision for delivery of services through Irish. Public bodies include agencies, boards, state companies, local authorities, health boards, any body or organisation or group that receives money directly from the government in circumstances where the amount received constitutes 50% or more of the current expenditure of that body.

Social Model

The more effective definition of 'disability' promoted by disabled activists, separates medical/clinical impairments such as cerebral palsy, MS, schizophrenia, etc. from social barriers created by men & women that disable people. This is embraced in the 'Social Model' which views social, economic & cultural organisations putting up conscious or unconscious barriers to disabled people reaching their full potential. Unlike the 'Medical/Charity Model', where the disabled person and their impairments are viewed as the problem and so needing help or charity, the 'Social Model' sees the structures of 'Society' as putting up barriers, and therefore Society's barriers are disabling problems. Disabled people see themselves as 'disabled' by inaccessible transport & buildings, but mostly by Medical/Charity Model attitudes.

national
childcare
strategy
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